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THE

MUTUAL RECOGNITION

AND

EXALTED FELICITY

OF

GLORIFIED SAINTS.

IN LETTERS TO A BEREAVED FRIEND,

BY

ROBERT MEEK,

OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

"The expectation of loving my friends in heaven, principally kindles my love to them on earth; and I take comfort in those of them who are dead, or absent, as believing I shall shortly meet them in heaven, and love them with a perfect love which shall there be perfected."—BAXTER.

LONDON:
J. HATCHARD AND SON, PICCADILLY.
1830.

181.

LONDON:
IBOTSON AND PALMER, PRINTERS, SAVOY STREET, STRAND.

PREFACE.

THE substance of what is now offered to the public, was contained in an Essay written by the Author, three years ago, at the request of a few friends. His manuscript has at different times been perused by several who have been bereaved of pious relatives, and who having received from it satisfaction and consolation, have repeatedly requested its publication as likely to prove useful to others. With a request thus urged the Author has felt it his duty to comply.

The subject of the following pages is one which cannot fail to prove generally interesting, inasmuch as there are few, if any, who have not had to mourn the death of a beloved friend. While the endeared connexions of mortality, are thus dissolved, it is natural to inquire, "are those endeared connexions at death dissolved

for ever?" "will they be restored and perpetuated for ever, under happier circumstances, in eternity?"

That so little has been done with a view of settling these inquiries, in a way which a subject so interesting and important merits, has been matter of surprise and regret to the Author and others. He will not presume to think that he has, in the present work, supplied what has long appeared to him a desideratum; this he leaves to others, to whose candid consideration the following pages are submitted, to decide.

The writer is not ambitious of authorship, in which, however, he has not to complain of want of encouragement; he is, however, most desirous of usefulness. To learn, that this effort has been honoured to this end; that it has ministered to the consolation of the bereaved, and imparted animation to their hopes;—will be to him the best reward of labour, and matter of devout gratitude to God.

R. M.

St. John's Coll. Cambridge.
February 1830.

MUTUAL RECOGNITION, &c.

LETTER I.

MOTIVES TO RESIGNATION ON THE DECEASE OF PIOUS FRIENDS.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Ever since that painful event, which has bereaved you of so dear and valued a friend, you have been much in my thoughts. The mere expression of my *sympathy*, of which you are already well assured, will not satisfy either you or myself. I yield therefore most readily to your request, that I would offer to your consideration some motives to resignation under your present trial; and especially, that I would more at large give you my views on the mutual recognition of glorified saints; on which delightful topic, you say, my remarks, at our late interview, afforded you both satisfac-

tion and comfort. It is, however, to the former of these topics I shall confine my attention in the present communication.

Believe me, my afflicted friend, I can enter into your present feelings, when you say, your late bereavement has made a chasm in your social enjoyments which nought earthly can fill;—that life is bereft of what rendered it powerfully attractive;—that this dispensation has cast a thick and melancholy shadow, over all which was once so lightsome and interesting;—that the garden which the dear deceased once adorned with so much taste, and the walks which you perambulated in company, have all lost their loveliness;—that every object which meets your eye; the vacant chair—the favourite book—the garment—the landscape, all awaken your sorrows, as they remind you of the loss you have sustained. Such feelings are natural in your case, and, when properly regulated, not to be condemned. Not to feel, and acutely too, under such trials as yours, is not Christian resignation; but savours more of that stoical apathy and obduracy of heart, which is as alien from humanity, as it is from the spirit of Christianity itself. When God visits with affliction, he designs that we shall *feel;* and unless we do so, it is not likely that his merciful designs in it can

be answered. Our blessed Redeemer wept at the grave of Lazarus his friend, and has thereby given the highest sanction to our sorrows when our beloved associates are taken from us by death. Not to be afflicted in soul, under such dispensations, is to "*despise* the chastening of the Lord:"—to abandon ourselves to excessive sorrow, is to "*faint* when we are rebuked of Him." It is against the latter, of which I perceive you are somewhat in danger, I wish to caution you; and, with this end in view, I will endeavour to present some considerations to your mind, which will furnish you with motives to resignation and peace.

Be concerned to recognize the hand of God in your late bereavement. Alas! how prone are we to trace our trials only to second causes, and to lose sight of God. But for such and such causes, we imagine our losses would not have happened; but for this accident, or that sickness, our dearest friends had not died! By ascribing our losses to second causes, we virtually exclude God from the government of the world. If, as Christ has taught us, "even the hairs of our head are all numbered," and not even "a sparrow falleth to the ground," without the knowledge and will of our heavenly Father; shall it be imagined that those events

which so deeply affect us, are the results of mere contingency, and not by his special direction or permission? When therefore one gourd of earthly bliss after another, withers and dies, let us not look only to the worm which destroyed its root, but to God who created the worm and used its instrumentality, for the accomplishment of his own will. So, that sickness or whatever cause, of the death of our darling, is to be regarded as God's instrument, commissioned to do his work. It was such a conviction as this, which led Aaron, when he saw his sons perish before his eyes, to "hold his peace;"—this led Job, when he received the melancholy tidings of the death of all his children, to exclaim, "the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away;"—this led Heman to say to his God, "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness."

We ought not, however, to rest in a mere recognition of the hand of God in such events—it behoves us to believe and acknowledge the rectitude of the divine conduct in them. It is not always easy to persuade ourselves, that *that* is right and good, which we find to be painful to us. At such seasons God's question to us is, "*Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?*" If a parent entrust a beloved child to

the care of others for a season, is it wrong in that parent to fetch his child home when he has sufficient reasons for so doing? If we deposit valuables with another, is it unjust to claim them, when we wish to possess them ourselves? We look round on our comforts, children, and friends, and fondly call them our own, and hope long to enjoy them; but God says, "*these are mine!*" and has he not a right to recall what he has lent us for a season, whenever it pleaseth him? I am aware, my dear friend, that a view merely of the *agency* and *justice* of God, in bereavements like yours, will not alone furnish sufficient motives to full and cheerful acquiescence in the divine will. Christian resignation is more than mere *submission* to events; there may be that, where the heart does not acquiesce in the events submitted to. It is when we acknowledge the agency of God, in what is most painful to us, and believe that God has wise and merciful intentions in what he does, and in the particular dispensation with which we are exercised, that we feel and express true Christian resignation. When, therefore, as in your case, God takes away by death "the delight of our eyes," we are to consider he has good and sufficient reasons for so doing. These are not always manifest to us at the time. He has,

however, condescended to give us sufficient information in his word, to warrant our belief as Christians, that he doeth all things well;—that behind those dark clouds which cover us with gloom, he is working our good and his own glory. Sometimes the removal of our comforts and friends is to correct us for our misuse of them. At times, we make the creature our idol; God takes it away to teach us he will admit no rival to share our hearts with himself. When He takes to himself our pious friends, however painful the event to us, it is in mercy to them. He will not longer have his friends at a distance from him, but sends death as the messenger to fetch them home to himself, and to the mansion and the crown which are prepared for them in heaven. These, with other reasons which will be suggested, are powerful motives to resignation to the divine will under bereaving dispensations.

When God removes from us by death our pious friends, we should not overlook, but gratefully acknowledge, his kindness, in preserving them to us so long. Some have just begun to know the value of their friend, and then the blessing has been withdrawn; the cup of bliss is scarcely raised to the lip and tasted, ere it is dashed from their hands—broken,—and all its

comforts spilt on the earth! Such, my friend, was not your case. When God, therefore, gives us valued friends, and continues the enjoyment to us, year after year, it calls loudly for our gratitude. When he resumes the boon, instead of repining, it is ours gratefully to acknowledge the comfort it has imparted, and the mercy which continued it so long.

Such an event is adapted most powerfully to impress the mind with a conviction of the vanity and uncertainty of all sublunary bliss. This is a lesson which we are slow to learn, and which God therefore teaches us by painful means. This is taught us by afflictive reverses in providence; but we then most feel it, when God puts our friends "far from us, and our acquaintance into darkness." We form our circle, draw out our plans, accumulate the means of earthly bliss, and calculate on years of enjoyment. Death comes, and by removing from us a friend, the circle is broken, our plans are disconcerted, our hopes blasted, and those scenes of future enjoyment, which we had painted in glowing colours, all vanish like the visions of the dream of midnight. God's design in all this is to demonstrate to us the vanity and insufficiency of all earthly bliss. As one strikingly remarks, "The dart of death is like a pen of iron in his

hand; and he writes emptiness and vanity on every friend, on every relative that he takes from our family, our side, our bosom; he writes it in deep and painful characters, and holds our souls to the solemn lesson. The same truth stands written in many a part of the book of God, in divine and golden letters; but perhaps we would never have learned it, had not death copied it out for us in letters of blood."

Our hearts are fastened to the world
By strong and endless ties,
And every sorrow cuts a string,
And urges us to rise.

When Heav'n would kindly set us free,
And earth's enchantment end,
It takes the most effectual means,
And robs us of a friend. *Young.*

How happy is it, when, thus painfully instructed, we practically exemplify the lesson we have been taught, by withdrawing our affections from earthly things, and fixing them on things which are above. We are, alas! prone to expect too much from creature sources of enjoyment, forgetting that at best they are but "broken cisterns;"—the best enjoyments of earth, like the running stream, are gliding and passing away from us. How necessary and proper, then, that we should be instructed by the deaths of our friends, and the failure of worldly comforts,

to fix our affections supremely on heavenly realities, which alone can satisfy the desires of the immortal soul,—which never fail,—but which are lasting and felicitating, as they are pure and divine. In this case, the failure of the streams of earthly bliss, need not unduly distress us, seeing God, the unfailing "fountain of living waters," remains to us. Though lover and friend, very pleasant to us on earth, be taken from us, we have in God an immortal friend, from whose love, neither life nor death can separate us.

While thus admonished and instructed by the deaths of our friends, we have much in the assurance we possess of their happiness and glory, to cheer and console us. The painful uncertainty, under which the most enlightened heathen laboured respecting the immortality of the soul and a future state; and their utter ignorance respecting the resurrection of the dead; led them to abandon themselves to excessive grief on the deaths of their friends:—"They sorrowed as those which had *no hope!*" To this the apostle, in his address to the Thessalonians, opposes the sublime discoveries of revelation, as so many motives to resignation and hope, under bereaving dispensations: "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not

even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."* Let us, then, turn from the graves of our friends, and for our consolation endeavour to follow their departed spirits to that state of exalted and glorious felicity, where they are associated with angels and glorified spirits;—themselves completely and everlastingly happy and glorified. Let our sorrows for our loss, give place to joys, for their high exaltation. They are unspeakable gainers by death—"their warfare is accomplished"—they have bidden an eternal adieu to all their sins and sorrows; they have left a world unfavourable to the growth and exercise of every Christian excellence; they now see God—they have attained to that perfection of knowledge, holiness, and happiness, which was here the object of their pursuits, de-

* 1 Thess. iv. 13—18.

sires, and prayers. Our Lord said to his disciples, who were overwhelmed at the prospect of his departure from them, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice that I go to the Father."* While the language was suited to console them, it seemed also to convey a reproof of their selfishness, and want of love to him, in that they wished to prevent his high exaltation, by detaining him among them on earth;—and is it less a proof of our selfishness and want of true love to our pious friends, to indulge intemperate sorrow when they "go to the Father?"—"To such to die," it has been well observed, "is to be born; they die only out of our mean world, and are born into a more glorious one. Their funerals should be celebrations of their *ascent*, and an exulting joy should, therefore, in that case, not be quite banished from funeral sorrows, but be allowed to mingle therewith, as sunbeams glittering in a cloud."

It tends also to diminish our regrets and to raise our hopes, to consider that the connexion between ourselves and our pious friends departed, is not finally dissolved, but only interrupted for a season. This led Seneca to say, "Non amittuntur, sed præmittuntur," (they are not lost, but gone before.) We shall meet them

* John xiv. 28.

again, and unite with them in nobler communion in that world, where no bars to intercourse will exist, and where the communion of the blessed with each other, and with their God, will be perfect and for ever. This happy meeting of glorified saints—their mutual recognition,—their exalted felicity, the prospect of which is so consoling, especially to the bereaved, will, according to your request, form the delightful topics of my subsequent communications.

Permit me, my dear friend, to conclude this letter, in the words of an esteemed writer, who, remarking on the sorrow expressed on the death of an eminent saint, says, "Whom would it not induce to mourn over this forlorn world, to see that every thing that is more excellent, more pure, more desirable, more capable of being useful in it, God is gathering up out of it? O how much of spirit and life is gone from it, where one such man dies! How are we to mourn over the world as dying gradually the worst sort of death, when the holy, divine life is thus exhaled out of it, and is expiring by degrees? But come, we have somewhat else to do than mourn; all this tends to make a glorious heaven, one bright star the more is now added to it; there is nothing of this holy life lost; whatsoever of excellency, purity, good-

ness, life, loveliness and love of that divine kind, vanishes from among us, is but transferred to its native place, returns to its proper element, as the forsaken dust hath to its own. Heaven hath its part out of every such person, the seat of all life, purity and goodness; as the earth draws into its bosom its own terrene part, not without a sacredness and a rich perfume adhering to that also. And as it is not our only or more principal business to mourn; so, nor is it to relieve and fortify ourselves against mourning. We have somewhat to do, diverse from them both, and that is more considerable than either of them. We are chiefly so to consider 'the death of a pious friend,' as may best serve the purposes of our own yet-continuing life. We are to set ourselves to learn from it what doth most concern our own daily practice and hope; so to acquit ourselves as not to neglect the duty of good and faithful servants to our common Lord, nor to come short of their reward."

LETTER II.

SOME CONSIDERATIONS WHICH SHOW THAT THE MUTUAL RECOGNITION OF GLORIFIED SAINTS IS PROBABLE.

It is not always the case that we have *direct* evidence of a truth, either arising from the testimony of others, or from our own observation or experience; yet a variety of facts and circumstances, render it so strongly probable, that we arrive at conclusions, amounting almost to certainty of belief. Such, to a certain extent, is the case in reference to the inquiry now proposed. Before the evidence of Scripture is examined, some general considerations will be noticed, which, it is presumed, go far to decide in the affirmative, the question, " whether glo-

rified saints will know, and enjoy communion with each other in a future state."

Man is a social being, and much of his happiness arises from communion with the friends he loves. To qualify us for the enjoyment of social happiness, God has blessed us with a social nature. Formed as we are then by the great Author of our being for society, without friendship our hearts would be solitary and desolate. So generally and powerfully is this felt, that the love of society is justly ranked among the natural and universal principles of our constitution. Even in paradise, before the fall, God declared it was not *good* for man to be *alone*. For Adam, enjoying that fairest earthly type of heaven, God provided a companion. How dreary and comfortless would prove the journey of life, without the sweets of friendship. Without this, it has been justly remarked, we feel ourselves in an unnatural state; and, by making companions of the lower animals, or by attaching ourselves to inanimate objects, strive to fill up the void of which we are conscious. To the existence of friendship, personal knowledge of our friends is necessary. "We love our friends," one observes, and his observations apply to friendship

on earth, "because we know them and are acquainted with the peculiar turn of their characters, the bent of their minds, and the general current of their feelings. We circumscribe each one in the limits of his own individuality; we isolate him from the rest of his species: every feature of his countenance is to us a symbol of some intrinsic excellence, which is concealed from others; and in proportion as we are thus obliged to stamp our friend with these symbols of intellectual and moral peculiarity, he awakens our love, and inspires us with confidence. Friendship individualises and appropriates. We derive little satisfaction from society in the gross, from beings that we do not know, whom we do not select, and with whom we cannot converse. With strangers, it is natural to feel a cold reserve, and it is only when knowledge and confidence are entire, that friendship can be said to exist in perfection." All this is in accordance with the moral constitution of man. Is it not reasonable and natural to expect, that this, which is one of the essential peculiarities of man's moral constitution, will be perpetuated in heaven? that those social and benevolent feelings which unite us to the friends we love here, instead of suffering annihilation

at death, will exist in heaven, and there attain to a degree of expansion and perfection, which they could not reach on earth? will that *knowledge* of our friends, which was necessary to our loving them on earth, cease in that world, where alone knowledge is perfect, and where every thing which is excellent, will be matured and perpetuated? To suppose this, would seem to require a radical change in the essential qualities of our nature; in fact, that we should cease to be human, to fit us to enjoy the happiness of heaven. "Is it not evident," says an excellent writer, treating on the social and benevolent affections of man, "that He who implanted these affections in the human breast, which are productive of so much delight, even amidst the obstacles and opposition with which they meet in our present state, will allow them their free course, when these obstacles are removed, when their indulgence must be pleasure unmixed, unclouded, unallayed; when all tears shall be wiped away, when there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor pain." This argument, for the mutual recognition and enjoyment of glorified saints, derives additional weight, from its harmonizing with the lovely representations of the social happiness of hea-

ven, as given in various parts of the sacred Scriptures.

This pleasing expectation is rendered probable by the strong and very general hope and desire, cherished, of being restored to the society and enjoyment of our pious friends after death. The natural desire, or as it has been poetically termed, "*a longing after immortality*," so generally felt by mankind, has been justly regarded as a presumptive proof of the immortality of the soul. There appears no just reason why this strong desire and hope of reunion with our friends hereafter, should not be considered as affording as strong a presumptive proof of the one, as of the other. It appears to have been implanted in the human bosom by God himself, and the influence of it is felt the stronger, the more nearly the subjects of it become assimilated to the divine purity. Who has not felt the consoling influence of such a hope, while committing to the grave all that is mortal of a dear departed friend: how loth were we to resign that precious dust:—with lingering steps and bleeding hearts we retired from the sepulchre:—but there, and often as we revisit the spot where slumber the ashes of our friend, the hope that we shall meet that friend

again, and enjoy blissful and ever-during communion with him in the skies, has dispelled the gloom of the sepulchre; and as we have wiped away the tear, this thought has proved a cordial to the heart—"I shall go to him, though he will not return to me!"

The promised results of Christian benevolence and exertions, appear not only to justify the expectation of this mutual recognition of glorified saints, but to require it. It is not always, in the nature of things, that the Christian is privileged here to witness the results of his pious efforts and prayers, on behalf of those in whose welfare he takes a lively interest. For wise ends God suffers the faith and patience of his people to be tried in this way. It would not always be safe for them to know the fact, or the extent to which they had succeeded in their pious and benevolent efforts. The results of their efforts and prayers are often developed when they have ceased to be inhabitants of earth:—the harvest appears, when they who scattered the precious seed are not on earth to fill their bosom with the sheaves—"and herein is that saying true, one soweth and another reapeth." There is, however, every reason to believe, from the influence which these results of their pious efforts and prayers will exert in their

happiness, and from the evidence which they will present of the divine faithfulness to his promises, that they will be made known to the pious departed in the world of spirits. That the glorified in heaven are not unacquainted with, or uninterested in, what takes place in the church below, is, we conceive, clear from what is revealed in sacred Scripture.

I am aware, my dear friend, that my last remark bears on a point of no common interest, and one for which you desire proof. In digressing to gratify your wish in this, so far as I may succeed, I shall add strength to the argument now before us. Are our departed and glorified friends conscious of *our* state? Do they take an interest in what relates to our immortal welfare? Some such inquiries presented themselves to the mind of the amiable and admired poet, Cowper, when he penned the following touching lines:—

"My mother, when I learned that thou wast dead,
Say, wast thou conscious of the tears I shed?
Hovered thy spirit o'er thy sorrowing son?
Wretch even then, life's journey just begun."

It is placed beyond doubt, by several passages of holy Scripture, that *angels* know what

is passing in our world:*—It was a prevailing belief among the Jews, in our Lord's days, that every person had his guardian angel: and does not our Lord seem to assent to this notion, when he says of infants,—"their angels do always behold the face of my Father?"† It is clearly revealed that angels "desire to look into" the wonders of human redemption, as developed from age to age in the salvation of man on earth.‡ And it is as clearly stated, that by the development which here takes place of this great mystery of human redemption, it was the "intent" of God, that, "unto the principalities and powers in *heavenly places*, might be known, *by the church*, the manifold wisdom of God."§ We have strong reason also for believing that angels are invisible spectators in our worshipping assemblies.‖ Our Lord assures us, that "there is joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repenteth."¶ These facts are sufficient to confirm the belief, that angels are not unacquainted with what is passing on earth. If angels possess this knowledge, is it at all likely that it will be hidden from glorified saints? Have they not an equal, yea, greater interest in what takes place in the church of God below?

* Heb. i. 12. † Matt. xviii. 10. ‡ 1 Pet. i. 12.
§ Eph. iii. 10. ‖ 1 Cor. ii. 10. ¶ Luke xv. 8.

Shall angels know the individual penitent, and exult in his repentance, and yet glorified saints, bound to that penitent by the relationship of a common nature, and it may be, by other peculiar and interesting ties, be denied the knowledge of so glorious an event, or be debarred the pleasure of uniting in the song of triumph it occasions? The great apostle Paul exhorts the Hebrew Christians to courage and perseverance in their Christian course in the following words:—"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run with patience the race set before us."* His allusion is clearly to the Grecian games, in which some contended for the prize in the race, in the presence of a great concourse of spectators. But, the "great cloud of witnesses" to which the apostle here refers, are those *glorified saints*, whose triumphs of faith he had celebrated in the preceding chapter; these are represented as bending down from their high seats in glory, and watching and rejoicing in the perseverance of those saints on earth, who "run with patience the race set before them." As from these facts it appears more than probable that glorified saints are aware of what is transacted on earth, so also it is probable, that in

* Heb. xii. 1.

common with angels, they serve God, as "ministering spirits," in the affairs of his widely-extended administration of providence and grace;—and in a peculiar manner watch over and subserve the best interests of those whom they have left behind, and who were dear to them by the ties of nature and religion.*

God's fidelity to his promises then, seems to require, that the success which has crowned the pious exertions and prayers of his servants, and which they were not permitted to witness on earth, should be made known to them in heaven. It is reasonable then to think, that seeing the inhabitants of heaven possess, by means which we know not, a knowledge of every instance of penitence which takes place on earth; that they have also a knowledge of the individual and of his moral history, whose repentance

* Is not this pleasing idea, though condemned by some as fanciful, favoured by Rev. xxii. 8, 9, and by the language of Christ, Luke xx. 36? On the words there used ἰσαγγελοι γαρ εισι, and which have been translated, "they are equal unto the angels," Dr. Dwight makes the following observations:—"those who obtain immortal life are said by our Saviour to be ἰσαγγελοι, *equal or like to angels*. This one declaration opens to us a wide field of inquiry and conclusion, and assures us that whatever angels are or do, or are exhibited as being or doing in the Scriptures, we also shall substantially be or do."

thus awakens their joys. It is more easy to imagine than to describe the joy of the glorified spirit, on learning that the individual whose conversion to God has occasioned such gladness in heaven, is one for whose salvation he laboured and prayed on earth. The faithful and now glorified pastor will exclaim, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!" Many a glorified parent will invite the hosts around the throne to share his joys: "this my son was dead and is alive again; was lost, and is found!" If glorified spirits thus possess a knowledge of the repentance of those who were dear to them on earth, is it not more probable that they will know such on their arrival in heaven, and thus have their joy on account of such perfected, in welcoming them home as their everlasting associates in the joys of immortality?

We are taught to conceive of heaven as a state of perfect knowledge. The apostle Paul delighted to indulge in this sublime anticipation. "*Now*," he says, "we see through a glass darkly; but *then* face to face: *now* I know in part; but *then* shall I know even as also I am known."* It would be difficult to conceive, how this sublime anticipation can be

* 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

realized, or heaven be a state of perfect knowledge, without a mutual recognition of glorified saints. The knowledge of glorified spirits will be as a golden key, to open to them unnumbered sources of enjoyment, hidden from us; and can it be supposed that this source of enjoyment, the knowledge and society of those glorified saints dear to them in this world, will be one which the key of heavenly intelligence will be unable, or forbidden to unlock? Will the happy spirit possess the high endowment of knowing and enjoying God, the Infinite Spirit, and as we shall have occasion to show, other glorified spirits, which in different ages inhabited this our world; and yet not know the spirits of those with whom on earth they held sweet converse, and who were their fellow-travellers to heaven? The knowledge of glorified spirits, so far from being impaired by their separation from their bodies, will, from that very circumstance, become more refined and perfect. On this point, the remarks of the excellent Baxter deserve notice. "Surely," says he, "there shall no knowledge cease which now we have; but only that which implieth our imperfection. And what imperfection can this imply? Nay, our present knowledge shall be increased beyond belief; it shall indeed be

'done away;' but as the light of the candle and the stars is done away by the rising of the sun, which is more properly doing away of our ignorance, than of our knowledge. Indeed, we shall not know each other after the flesh; not by stature, voice, colour, complexion, visage, or outward shape—if we had so known Christ, we should know him no more: not by parts and gifts of learning, nor titles of honour or worldly dignity; not by terms of affinity, nor benefits, &c. but by the image of Christ and spiritual relation, and former faithfulness in improving our talents, beyond doubt we shall know and be known."

These general considerations are not only sufficient to show the probability of a mutual recognition of glorified saints, but will go far in establishing the doctrine. What, however, on these general principles appears so strongly probable, can be abundantly confirmed by the evidence of Scripture, to which, in my next, an appeal will be made.

LETTER III.

THE SCRIPTURAL EVIDENCE OF A MUTUAL RECOGNITION OF GLORIFIED SAINTS.

I REJOICE that the proof adduced in my last, in favour of the *probability* of a recognition of each other, by glorified saints, proved so satisfactory. You ask me, however, to produce the evidence for this doctrine from the word of God. Is it, you inquire, a doctrine contained in the sacred Scriptures? To this inquiry, I will now attempt a reply. I beg however to premise, that the evidence from the word of God on this point, is more of an indirect and *inductive,* than of a *positive* nature. The information we have on the subject, from this source, is more by legitimate inference from other premises, than by positive revelation. Nor is this the only important truth which God, for wise ends, has seen fit to teach us in this way. Not to men-

tion others, the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity, for the most part, rests on proof of this kind. In using this mode of conveying instruction on this and other truths, God acts towards us, as intellectual beings; he rouses us to inquiry, and recompenses devout inquiry, with renewed discoveries and increasing satisfaction. The late excellent Bishop Heber observes, and his remarks will apply here:—"The soul of man is not only delighted with knowledge, but if she be in a healthy and natural condition, she is delighted also with the act of learning: but that this act should be either agreeable or efficacious, it is necessary that we should do it for ourselves. Accordingly, to confer on his creatures rather the means of knowledge, than knowledge itself; to encourage them to elicit the truth by their natural faculties from data supernaturally communicated, is that conduct which we should, *a priori*, and in a gracious conformity to the frame of our nature, most reasonably expect from an allwise and benevolent instructor. What wonder, then, if there are certain truths which He has reserved, as the reward of an attentive consideration of those which He has expressed more clearly; what wonder, if many remarkable

features of his government and nature are revealed to us, by *implication* only!"

"What saith the Scripture?" Many a pleasing hope is indulged, which the word of God does not sanction. Is the pleasing expectation of knowing our friends in heaven of this kind? Could that be proved, it would be our duty to abandon it. On the contrary, the evidence of Scripture, which sanctions this fond hope is, we conceive, abundant and satisfactory. How does this tend to endear to us the word of God! Not only does it reveal to us the divinely-appointed method of our restoration to the divine image and favour, and open to us a thousand sources of consolation adapted to our present circumstances; but it sheds the light of immortal glory over the darkest shadows of death and the grave. It assures us, while our hearts bleed at a thousand pores, for the loss of our beloved friends, that we shall see them again, and renew our intercourse with them under happier circumstances in a better world, into which death never enters, and where the pang of separation is unknown. In vain shall sceptics, who would plunge us in all the cheerlessness and gloom of infidelity, try to dash from our hands the torch of Revelation; we will hold it fast, and by its illumination will

walk cheerfully through scenes of trouble—bid the shadows of death retire as we advance, and never consent to part with it, till we exchange its light for the splendours of the skies.

In the Old Testament Scriptures, we have several facts recorded, from which the doctrine we are investigating may be naturally inferred. In this light Luther regarded Adam's recognition of Eve, when God presented her to him in the garden.* Being asked on his death-bed, his opinion, whether we should know each other in heaven, Luther replied: "How was it with Adam? he had never seen Eve, yet he asked not who she was, or whence she came; but said, she is flesh of my flesh, and bone of my bone. And how knew he that? why, being full of the Holy Ghost, and endued with the true knowledge of God, he so pronounced. After the same sort shall we be renewed by Christ in another life, and shall know our parents, wives, children, &c. much more perfectly than Adam did then know Eve." When the venerable Jacob, having made an end of blessing his sons, "gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost," the sacred historian informs us, "he was gathered unto his people."† While death separated him from his people on earth,

* Gen. ii. 23. † Gen. xlix. 33.

he was thereby gathered to his people in heaven, to the glorified spirits of those whom he knew on earth, to whom he was related, and whom there he should know and enjoy. This pleasing expectation was avowed by David on the death of his child. While the child was yet alive, he fasted, wept, and prayed for the life of the child; but when he understood that the child was dead, he changed his apparel, ceased to weep, and said, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."*

The information contained in the volume of Revelation, respecting a future state, was gradually imparted to mankind. Under the patriarchal age, the light possessed on this subject resembled the dim twilight of the morning, feebly and gently breaking upon the world. Under the dispensation of the law, it resembled the lovely dawn of the day: under succeeding dispensations it shone brighter; but, "it is *now* made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and *hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*"† The facts recorded and the information imparted by the Gospel, have thrown over the doctrine of immortality, a light and a glory unknown before. It is in

* 2 Samuel xii. 23. † 2 Tim. i. 10.

the New Testament we expect to find the clearest evidence to justify the pleasing hope for which we contend ; nor are we disappointed here.

The glorious scene which occurred on Mount Tabor, is a fact of this nature. On that occasion our Lord, intending to manifest his glory, took with him up the mountain Peter, James, and John, and " was transfigured before them, and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light."* On that occasion there appeared in glory, Moses and Elias, from the world of spirits, talking with Jesus. Our Lord's disciples knew those glorified visitors to be Moses and Elias. How they knew them, whether by intuition, or by intimation from their Lord, we stay not to inquire; the fact, that they did know them to be Moses and Elias, is sufficient for our present purpose. Can it be supposed that perfected spirits in heaven will be less capable of a knowledge of each other, than our Lord's disciples were on Mount Tabor? It appears probable, that among other important ends designed to be answered by this glorious scene on Tabor, our Lord intended it as a representation of the blessedness enjoyed by glorified saints in the knowledge and

* Matt. xvii. 2, 3.

society of himself and each other, in his heavenly kingdom.

Our blessed Lord represents in several places, lost souls, whom the "great gulf" separated for ever from the abodes of the glorified, as seeing and recognizing in that distant and glorified multitude of the saved in heaven, some whom they knew on earth, and others from whom they boasted descent, or to whom they were related by natural ties:—"there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall *see* Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out."* The rich man "in hell lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom,"† who a short time before, as a beggar, waited at his gate, and desired to be fed with the crumbs which fell from his table. If lost souls, from their prison of despair, are to recognize glorified saints as an aggravation of their misery; it is a fair and natural inference, that the blessed in heaven will know each other, to the increase of their happiness; for that which will be to the lost a source of torment, will to the glorified prove a source of felicity. Our Lord's reply to the captious Sadducees, who

* Luke xiii. 28. † Luke xvi. 23.

produced the case of a woman, who had seven husbands, and demanded of him whose wife she should be in the resurrection, assumes the fact of such a mutual recognition of each other in a future state, while it exposes and condemns the inference they wished to draw from it.*

We are not left, however, merely to this inductive kind of proof, but have evidence of this doctrine of a positive character. We find it in those sublime and interesting representations which Christ has made of the heavenly state. Our Lord represents his redeemed as coming from the east and the west, from the north and the south, "and sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of heaven." † It is here clearly intimated, that perfected spirits will recognize those ancient saints, with whom they are to be delightfully associated in the bliss of heaven. This being admitted, it would seem unreasonable to suppose that later saints, and more especially those dear to them on earth, should be unknown to them in heaven. In another place, Christ, cautioning against the abuse of riches, says, "Make to yourselves *friends* of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail, *they* may receive you into everlasting habitations." ‡

* Mark xii. 22—25. † Luke xiii. 28, 29. ‡ Luke xvi. 9.

As if our Lord had said, "So use those riches, which are to others the occasion of sin, in relieving the natural and moral necessities of others, that when your heart and flesh shall fail you, they whom you have consoled and befriended, having reached heaven before you, may welcome you, their benefactors on earth, into heavenly and everlasting habitations." By this our Lord clearly intimates, that glorified saints will have a knowledge of each other in heaven, and a joyful and grateful remembrance of benefits conferred and received. In the sublime description which our Lord gives of the transactions of the last judgment, *He* represents himself as pointing out to those on his right hand, some of his poor members, whom, for his sake, they had visited and relieved on earth. "Inasmuch," will Christ then declare to their joy, "as ye have done it unto one of the least of *these* my brethren, ye have done it unto me."* They will then know those poor brethren of Christ; they will recognize, among the multitudes of the redeemed on the right hand, such as for Christ's sake they visited in dungeons, in the abodes of poverty, and in seasons of deep affliction and distress.

This delightful expectation of knowing our

* Matt. xxv. 40.

glorified friends in heaven, was one in which apostles found consolation. "What," says St. Paul, "is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ *at his coming?* For ye are our glory and our joy;"* and in another place this same apostle states this as the great end of preaching Christ, "that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."† "By which," says the judicious Paley, "I understand St. Paul to express his hope and prayer, that at the general judgment of the world, he might present the fruits of his ministry, the converts whom he had made to his faith and religion, and might present them perfect in every good work; and if this be rightly interpreted, then it affords a manifest and necessary inference, that the saints in a future life will meet and be known again to each other; for how, without knowing his converts in their new and glorified state, could St. Paul desire or expect to present them at the last day?"

The clear and very natural conclusion, to which the evidence adduced conducts us, is, that it will be one ingredient in the happiness of "the spirits of the just made perfect," to know and enjoy communion with each other in a future state.

* 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20. † Col. i. 28.

I will close this letter by briefly replying to two inquiries, which you have proposed; i. e. *How* will glorified saints know each other in heaven? If they know their glorified friends, will it not be to them a source of regret and pain, at not finding, in heaven, some who were dear to them, and for whose salvation they were concerned on earth? *How*, or by what means, disembodied spirits become acquainted with each other, cannot in the present state be determined. A mysterious cloud stretches over the future, and hides it from our view. But there appears no more difficulty in admitting a knowledge hereafter, *intellectually*, than here by bodily lineaments or features. The same light which capacitates the disembodied spirit for the knowledge of God the Infinite Spirit, will equally impart the capacity of knowing finite and kindred spirits. The excellent Dr. Watts, referring to separate spirits, says, "These have a more immediate perception of God the Infinite Spirit, and converse with each other, perhaps, under no confinement, or under such lesser limitations, as their Creator's will, and their own finite natures, make necessary. They become conscious of one another's thoughts and volitions, by some unknown way that God has appointed; for, as an embodied spirit is conscious of the motions

of that animal to which it is united by the appointment of God, as it becomes conscious of the motions of other bodies round about it by the organs of that particular animal; and, as it is also conscious of the thoughts of other embodied spirits by the motions or voices of their several engines or animal bodies, so, doubtless, there is a way which God, the Creator Spirit, has ordained, whereby created spirits, which are social beings, shall maintain society and friendly communion with other created spirits, when they are in their native state separate from material engines."—But full information on this and many other points respecting separate spirits, is reserved for that world where we shall know as we also are known.

You ask, if it will prove a source of bliss to glorified saints to recognize in heaven their pious friends, will it not be a source of regret and pain to miss some there who were dear to them on earth? To this it may be replied, heaven is a state of perfect blessedness, from which every feeling of pain or regret is for ever excluded. "God will, there, wipe away all tears from the eyes" of his redeemed. To this it may be added, in that perfect state, to which we refer, the will and affections will be so completely absorbed in the will of God, that what-

ever is *His* pleasure, must please us. We may therefore be assured, then, even if known to us there, the absence of those dear to us will excite no painful emotions. Their circumstances may awaken feelings of compassion, but that compassion will not then, as now, be connected with pain; but such as angels feel on beholding the misery of fallen mankind; so allied with complete resignation to the divine will, as necessarily to exclude and annihilate all feelings of dissatisfaction and pain. Our individual feelings will then be completely and for ever absorbed in the supreme will and good pleasure of that God who doeth all things well. May it be your happiness and mine to see those who are dear to us, now walking in the way to heaven, and hereafter to meet them there in perfect holiness and happiness!

LETTER IV.

THE INFLUENCE WHICH THE MUTUAL RECOGNITION OF GLORIFIED SAINTS WILL EXERT ON THEIR FELICITY IN HEAVEN.

THE Christian graces, Faith, Hope, and Love, are not only to be regarded as principles, by which the Christian acts, but as so many sources of ennobling pleasures. The inspired apostle hath taught us, that of these graces, as now exercised, only one will accompany us to heaven. Faith and hope shall cease, because in heaven, the fruition of all they anticipated on earth will be realized; but divine love is immortal as the object in whom it centres and delights. In heaven alone the Christian's love of God and his saints will be perfected; there, all impediments to its exercise will be removed, as there, and there only, will be seen and felt, in

their full force, all the motives to its exercise. There, the Christian will enjoy the sabbath of love. It is true, that the glorified will find their chief bliss in the perfect love of God, and the full consciousness of being beloved by Him; yet there is reason to believe, that in loving and being beloved, by their glorified companions with a full and heavenly flame, will consist no small measure of their felicity; and that this knowledge and love of each other, instead of abating, will increase the ardours of their love to the Godhead. This view of the interesting doctrine we have been considering, if it can be sustained, will furnish an additional argument in its favour. I will therefore notice some respects in which it is conceived this mutual recognition of glorified saints will contribute to their felicity.

The knowledge which perfected spirits will have of *ancient* glorified saints, will be to them a source of joy. How delightful will it be to know and converse with those believers of former ages, the records of whose piety, as contained in the word of God, have so powerfully excited our admiration, and ministered to our moral improvement! To have listened for a short time to the discourse of two of their number, who appeared in glory at our Lord's trans-

figuration on Tabor, doubtless produced much of that joyful state of feeling, which led Peter to exclaim, "Lord, it is good to be here." What vast and delightful accessions of knowledge of the most interesting kind will be the result of this mutual recognition and communion of glorified saints! Later saints will learn from the first parents of mankind, more of their eventful history, than God has seen fit to reveal to us in his word:—how the first promise of mercy, made to them in the garden, removed their guilty fears, and opened to their views the bright visions of that redemption from the miseries of the fall, which, in the fulness of time, was accomplished by "*the* seed of the woman." Righteous Abel will tell, with what joy angels beheld and welcomed him as the first that entered into heaven from earth, as washed in the blood and robed in the righteousness of a Saviour. Enoch will relate with what joy he on earth walked with God, and the particulars of his glorious translation to the skies. From Abraham, the father of the faithful, it will be a pleasure to learn what views he had of the day of Christ, which made his heart leap for joy when he cast the eye of his faith down the long vista of ages, and caught a prophetic view of the glories of redeeming love. Patriarchs, pro-

phets, apostles, and martyrs, will throw light on the history of the times in which they lived. Thus, as one remarks, "the chasms of history will be supplied—its obscurities elucidated—its errors corrected, and its contradictions reconciled. No loss will be sustained through the impossibility of having recourse to valuable records, from whatever cause. The persons concerned in any particular affair, may relate it themselves, or at least some one, both able and willing, may reveal the secret."

Thus also may stores of valuable knowledge be imparted to glorified ancient believers, by those who have lived in later ages of the church and the world. The apostle's declaration has already been noticed, that the *intent* of God, in the gradual development of the wonders of redeeming love, was that "unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known, *by the church*, the manifold wisdom of God." "Oh! how do the principalities and powers in heavenly places put to shame multitudes of puny mortals creeping in the dust, who, possessing a smattering of knowledge, are too proud to be taught, or at least scorn to receive instruction from such as they consider in any respect their inferiors! Sitting in their thrones in the heavenly places, these principalities and powers are

willing to be taught: yea, in their eagerness of desire to know more of God and his ways, they disdain not to place themselves as humble scholars at the foot of the church, a society composed of inferior rank and weaker powers, and moving in a lower sphere." Seeing "the principalities and powers in heavenly places" are thus instructed by what is taking place in the church below, it is not unreasonable to believe that the glorified saints of former times will derive much valuable information from those of after times. Every fresh arrival in the regions of bliss, will bear from earth some interesting tidings which will relate not only to the grand scheme of redemption generally, but to those connexions and localities so interesting to the saints while they tabernacled here on earth. Ancient believers will thus learn how wonderfully have been fulfilled those promises which were the support of their faith: they will learn how abundant has been the harvest of their exertions and prayers; what delightful changes have been effected by divine grace in those localities and connexions, the moral wretchedness of which so deeply affected them, and the moral renovation of which they never ceased to desire. Without extending this contemplation, it is easy to conceive, that as glorified saints thus

recognize each other, and mutually impart their delightful stores of intelligence, they will thus gain fresh and enlarged views of God's government and grace, and be furnished with new motives to love and adore him.

If thus to recognize and commune with the glorified spirits of former ages will be an addition to the bliss of the redeemed in heaven; much more will the recognition and reunion of those who knew and loved and communed with each other on earth. The meeting of friends on earth, who have separated for a season, is ever a pleasing event: if great distance, if vast oceans rolling between, or painful circumstances had long kept them apart, the pleasure of the reunion is enhanced. How much more joyful this recognition and reunion of spirits in heaven after separation by *death!* As spirit after spirit from earth enters that world of light, and recognizes and is recognized by spirits there, will be heard such joyful exclamations as these:—"There," will one joyfully exclaim, "is that faithful minister of Christ, whom God honoured as the instrument of saving my soul from death; he led me to the true and saving knowledge of myself and my Saviour. He removed my doubts and fears, conducted me into the fold of Christ, and encouraged me to walk with God. In my

last moments in yonder world, he cheered and strengthened my faith and hope by setting before me the sacred promises, and directing my thoughts to the heaven I now enjoy!" "There," will another exclaim, "is the companion of a great part of my journey of life, who joyed with me when I rejoiced, and who wept with me when I wept; for a season on earth we walked together as heirs of the grace of life, and though separated from each other by death, we are now together as heirs in possession." "There," will others say, "are those honoured parents, who early, by faith and prayer, devoted us to God—who as soon as our reason began to dawn, and our tongues to lisp, directed us to a Saviour, taught us to lisp his praises, and to implore his grace. To them, as God's honoured instruments, we owe our deliverance from the wrath to come, and the possession of the glorious felicity we now enjoy." Glorified parents, as one after another of their children arrives in heaven, will exultingly say, "Behold us and the children which God has given us; for the salvation of these children we watched, laboured, and prayed; we pleaded on their behalf the divine promise to our seed. God has been mindful of his promise, he has answered our prayers. Welcome! welcome, my son! my daughter! to this

bright world, to the unveiled presence, the everlasting joy of our God and Saviour!" These, and similar recognitions and reunions, will doubtless add to the bliss of glorified spirits in heaven.

This will also be subservient to the increase of the happiness of glorified saints, as it will exhibit the pleasing results of their prayers and exertions. This idea, though it has been stated already, deserves here a more particular notice. As here, the saints of God are called to *walk* by faith, so are they called to *labour* by faith. The words of the inspired apostle well describe the work and spirit of those who exert themselves for the glory of God and the salvation of others; "Your work of faith, and labour of love and patience of hope, in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father."* The active faith, laborious love and patient hope, by which Christians are animated and supported in their efforts for the glory of God and the best interests of their fellow-creatures, will receive their gracious and full recompence, when glorified spirits recognize each other in heaven. We are not able, and probably for wise ends it is not permitted us, in our present state of imperfection, to trace all the happy results of our distinct

* 1 Thess. i. 3.

agency in those efforts of benevolence to which we are prompted by love to God, and compassion to souls. The fruits of our individual prayers and labours, are not discernible amidst the accumulated results of the combined efforts of Christian benevolence. As, however, the word of God gives us reason to believe that the distinct agency of every man's sin and its particular consequences in the baneful influence it has had on others, is distinctly known to God, and will be disclosed hereafter to the sinner's shame and condemnation: so have we equal reason to believe and hope, that the distinct efforts of the Christian, for the glory of God and the salvation of sinners, and the particular and happy results of those efforts, will be manifest hereafter to the joy and consolation of those who labour for God.* Not only then will be seen the fruits of our exertions, within the sphere of our present localities, but the results also of pious solicitude and benevolence on the behalf of those dwelling in the uttermost parts of the earth, will appear in the particular objects whose salvation they have promoted. The individuals, to whom the consecrated contributions, and the effectual fervent prayers of the righteous, were instrumentally the means of conveying the pre-

* Gal. vi. 7.

cious boon of salvation, will then be joyfully recognized, by those who thus proved themselves the friends of God and man. What joy will it then impart to the faithful minister of Christ, to recognize, among the multitudes redeemed from the earth, many to whom God blessed his instrumentality; to see some there, to whom, though they entered heaven before him, his usefulness by him was unknown; and as fresh arrivals take place, to recognize some concerning whom, while living, he indulged no hope, and over whose obduracy of heart he wept in secret. He will then see that the precious seed he scattered and watered with his tears, was not sown in vain, and that he did not spend his strength for nought. Parents who laboured for God in their families: those who aided in sending the gospel to the heathen by their contributions and prayers; and all who in their respective spheres aimed at doing good, will rejoice in the fruits of their labours; "both he that soweth and he that reapeth shall rejoice together." There will be no danger then of such happy disclosures exciting pride in glorified spirits. They will ascribe all the glory of what they did on earth,—the disposition to attempt it—and their success, to the grace of God,

which so freely and yet so powerfully wrought in them "to will and to do."

This recognition of glorified saints will also have an influence on their felicity in heaven, as it will be connected with a review of those providential dispensations by which they were mutually affected on earth. God, in the present state, for wise ends, veils from us his designs, in those providential dispensations by which he tries us. How often do our efforts to learn the reasons of God's providential conduct towards us fail, and compel us to exclaim, "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself!" Our earthly gourds wither and perish, at a time when they appear most needful; our cisterns of worldly enjoyments are broken, and our comforts spilt upon the ground; our beloved friends sicken and die; our hearts bleed with anguish, and full of perplexity we cry, "Show me, O Lord, wherefore thou *contendest* with me?" We mistake the design of God towards us in his providence, from ignorance and our consequent inability to comprehend the vastness of *his* allwise and gracious plans. We are often *too near* the events, to form a correct judgment of them; it is when viewed at a distance, in their connexion and consequences,

that their true character, importance, and usefulness to us, will be best ascertained. Hence it has happened, that many, on reviewing those painful dispensations which at the time filled them with perplexity and distress, have seen reason to bless God for them, and say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." At present, however, we are liable to mistake in our judgment of Providence. "We judge as by seeing the wrong side of a piece of tapestry." What, however, is not cleared up to our satisfaction on earth, will be fully made known to us hereafter in the light of glory. When the saints of God meet and recognize each other in heaven, it will doubtless be a part of their delightful employment to review together the ways of Providence. They will then study Providence as complete and in a perfect light: they will then point out to each other the wisdom, love, and faithfulness of God, in those particular events by which they were mutually affected, the joys and sorrows of which they reciprocated. They will then see how this and that particular event, however painful and mysterious to them at the time, was commissioned by God, not only to prevent evil, but to effect positive good. It will then be fully revealed to them, what it was their comfort here,

in their darkest moments, to believe, "that all things work together for good to them that love God." While thus employed in tracing together the wisdom, love, and faithfulness of God in his providence towards them, they will excite each other's gratitude to the God of providence, and minister to each other's happiness.

It will add in no small degree to the joy arising from this recognition of our pious friends in heaven, that we shall then know them, and commune with them, as for ever freed from all imperfections. "I have seen," said David, "an end of all perfection." The truth of this sentiment we painfully feel. As the most glorious object in nature, the sun, has its spots; so has the brightest Christian his spots and blemishes. If we find happiness here in the society of our pious friends, notwithstanding their infirmities, how much more will this be the case when glorified spirits shall know and enjoy each other in heaven, as freed from every imperfection and complete in holiness! The imperfections found in the best, often mar and interrupt Christian communion on earth: they engender painful suspicions of each other. But in heaven, as all will be perfect, there will be no ground for suspicion;

there, a fear will never be felt, lest a Judas should be found in their society. They will recognize and enjoy each other as completely conformed to the image of Christ. The recollection of those imperfections which they once observed and lamented in each other, will, by raising their gratitude to Him who has freed them from every spot and blemish, prove to them a source of love and joy.

The knowledge which glorified saints will have of each other, and their delightful communion with each other, will add to their heavenly felicity, as it will increase their love to Christ, and exalt him more in their affections and their praises. It is now matter of grief and humiliation, that, in many instances, the love which we bear to the creature, steals away our hearts from God: we are then made most sensible of this when God takes from us the object of our heart's love. There will be no danger of this in heaven. Glorified spirits, when recognizing and holding delightful communion with each other, will feel, that for all that is excellent in them, they are indebted to the grace of God. That which they behold glorious in each other, they will value as derived from Christ, and as a resemblance of Christ. Their love and admiration, on these ac-

counts, will not rest in themselves, but be transferred to Him, and rest in Him, who by his grace has made them what they are. Thus their mutual recognition and love, will raise their glorified affections to their exalted Redeemer, in increased and increasing ardours of love and gratitude. Every other feeling will then be absorbed in the sublime passion of love to God.

To this may be added, the persuasion, that their communion with their glorified friends, whom it will be their joy then to recognize, is to be *uninterrupted, and for ever.* How short and liable to interruptions, the communion of saints on earth! The joy of many a happy meeting here is marred by the anticipation of approaching separation. The most endeared connexions of time, are soon dissolved. One after another is removed by death from our social circles, and from the church militant to the church triumphant. But when glorified spirits meet above, recognize each other and renew their communion, under happier circumstances, there will be no gloomy prospect of separation: their union, their blessedness will be *for ever!* Safely arrived, and happily met in their heavenly Father's house—admitted to the nobler worship of the celestial temple, "they shall go no

more out!" Will not this persuasion add to the joys of glorified saints? May these sublime hopes, my dear friend, support our minds under those painful bereavements which we are here called to sustain: let us hasten onwards in faith and holiness to reach the glories of that state, where that communion with our pious friends, interrupted for a season by death, will be restored under happier circumstances, and perpetuated for ever.

LETTER V:

THE MORAL EFFECTS WHICH THE BELIEF OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE MUTUAL RECOGNITION OF GLORIFIED SAINTS OUGHT TO PRODUCE ON THE CHURCH BELOW.

MOST cheerfully do I resume my pen, to follow up the interesting topic which has formed the subject of several previous letters. In my last communication I endeavoured to show, that the mutual recognition of glorified saints will contribute to their happiness in heaven. In this it will be attempted to show, that the belief and expectation of this is adapted to serve important moral purposes in the church below. The moral tendency and effects of any system of belief, or of any single truth assumed to be such, will furnish one of the best evidences of its truth and importance. If therefore it can be made to appear, that the expectation of knowing our glorified friends,

and enjoying their society in a future state, is subservient to important moral purposes here, it will strengthen the arguments which have been advanced in its favour. Though some cherish the hope, who manifest the utmost indifference as to its practical uses, be it ours to prize and hold it fast, not only as a source of consolation, but as a powerful incentive to faith and holiness.

The cheering expectation of recognizing our pious friends in heaven, has a tendency to impart dignity and elevation to Christian friendship. We naturally desire that our valued friendships should be lasting. How desirable that this fabric of our happiness should be constructed with the elements of eternity. That friendship, is of all others the most valuable which is founded in divine love and cemented by spiritual ties; for while every other tie is dissolved by death, holy friendship will survive the stroke of mortality, and flourish for ever in that world of love, for the enjoyment of which it is one means of preparing us. While such an expectation as this, invests Christian friendship with moral grandeur, it has a direct tendency to increase and sanctify our attachment to the pious friends we love; it assures us, that though our endeared intimacy may be

interrupted by death, it is not destroyed: it points us to better days, when that endeared intimacy which was only suspended for a season, that it might be heightened and improved, shall be renewed and everlastingly perpetuated. "I must confess," remarks the excellent Baxter, "as the experience of my own soul, that the expectation of loving my friends in heaven, principally kindles my love to them on earth. If I thought I should never know them, and consequently never love them after this life is ended, I should in reason number them with temporal things and love them as such, at the same time allowing for the excellent nature of grace; but I now delightfully converse with my pious friends, in a firm persuasion that I shall converse with them for ever; and I take comfort in those of them who are dead or absent, as believing I shall shortly meet them in heaven, and love them with a perfect love, which shall there be perfected."

This expectation is adapted most powerfully to influence us in the formation of important connexions in life. What emphasis does it give to the apostolic injunction—"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."* The formation of such unhappy connexions has

* 2 Cor. vi. 14.

ever proved a source of affliction and danger to those Christians who have erred in this way. Their worldly interests may thus have been advanced, but they have suffered loss in what connects with the spiritual interests of their souls. Their prayers have been hindered—their true peace of mind has been disturbed—their progress heavenward has been retarded. There is something unutterably painful in the idea of connecting ourselves most intimately with those, from whom, at death, there is reason to apprehend an everlasting separation—of selecting those as the companions of our journey through life, who may accompany us to the end of our course, but to whom we must then bid adieu *for ever*. The expectation of reunion with pious friends in heaven, properly regarded, would secure anxiety to connect ourselves in this manner only with those with whom we can converse here, "as heirs together of the grace of life." A peculiar blessedness pertains to such connexions; they are not only cemented by the ties of strong natural affection, but dignified by the sure and certain hope of immortal duration.

What a peculiar sweetness and glory does this pleasing anticipation give to all the enjoyments of social love and Christian intercourse

in the present world. When such converse together on divine topics, they may cheer each other with the prospect of understanding those sublime truths better in heaven, and of conversing on them, together, with clearer views and better feelings than they do at present. When they come to the house of God in company, and unite in holy worship, they may encourage each other with the hope that they shall ere long meet in the celestial temple, where they will not feel those hindrances, that hardness and insensibility of soul, and vagrancy of mind, which they now mutually bewail to each other. And when they meet at the table of their common Lord and Saviour, to commemorate the sufferings he endured for them, to redeem them from everlasting wrath, and to bring them to God, they may delightfully regard each other as destined by grace to sit down together at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Such anticipations as these give a freshness, a strength, and a value to Christian fellowship on earth, which justly entitles "the communion of saints" to be regarded as among the distinguishing privileges of Christians.

This pleasing expectation is well adapted to give a powerful impulse to our efforts for the salvation of those we love. Something like

this appears to have entered into the feelings and conduct of apostles, "warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, *that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.*"* Did we act under the influence of a similar desire and expectation, how abundant would be our labours, and how incessant our prayers, for the conversion to God, of those whom we desire to be our associates in heavenly blessedness. There is something truly exhilirating in the thought of having those seated near us at the heavenly banquet, whom we through God's blessing were instrumental in saving from death, and bringing into the fold of Christ. Next to the divine glory, and the worth of the soul, it is not easy to imagine a motive better adapted to impart energy and secure perseverance in our efforts for so important an end.

What a solace does this hope impart to our minds, when death bereaves us of pious and beloved friends. When the friends we love sicken and die, and we follow their precious remains to the house appointed for all living, it seems as if half the charms of life had withered, and a blank were made in our enjoyments, which nought besides on earth can fill. We often heave the involuntary sigh, as we miss them in

* Col. i. 28.

the social circle, in the accustomed walk, or in the sanctuary. How doubly agonizing would this be, but for the expectation of meeting them again. This hope makes us feel that the ties which bound our hearts to the dear departed are not dissolved, that the separation which death has made, though painful, is but that of friends separated by *distance*, who ere long will meet again under happier circumstances, and enjoy everlasting communion, as kindred spirits with each other in heaven. With such a hope, we may inscribe on the tombs of our pious departed friends, "*Not lost, but gone before.*"

Such an expectation properly cherished, has a direct tendency to wean us from earth, and to raise our affections towards heaven. I am fully aware, that the vision and fruition of God and the Lamb, will constitute the chief bliss of heaven. But will it not, in subordination to this, prove an additional circumstance in the happiness of heaven, to enjoy there communion with our glorified friends? Such a hope renders heaven more attractive. We attach peculiar interest to those spots on earth where dwell the friends we love; and in proportion to the regard we bear to them, the place of their abode gains upon our affections. Our love to them invests the place of their abode with all

the charms of moral beauty, even though the natural scenery by which they are surrounded be barren and uninteresting. When one after another dear to us quits the place where we dwell, we feel that it has lost much that once rendered it interesting. Though all around might be lovely as Eden ere it became blighted by man's transgression, our affections become alienated from it; and we sigh and wish to remove to the neighbourhood of our friends, whose society makes even the wilderness and solitary place glad, and the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose. Thus it is here: the removal of our pious friends by death has made earth poorer than it was, and has a tendency to wean our affections from it: the assurance that they are in heaven, where we shall meet them again, and enjoy everlasting communion with them, renders heaven more attractive to us, and increases the ardour of our desires to reach and enjoy it.

Such an expectation is equally adapted to influence and console our minds in the prospect of our own removal from this world by death. To a mind possessed even of an ordinary share of sensibility, there is that in death, especially in the circumstances of *dying*, which is truly solemn. The prospect of a dissolution, at no

very distant period, of all those ties which now attach us to earth; the separation of those closest companions, body and soul; the entrance of the soul on that eternal and untried state of existence, every circumstance of which is beyond the range of mortal observation, are solemn and weighty anticipations. An excellent and devotional writer remarks—"When towards the close of life, a voyage is undertaken to another hemisphere, to a shore whence the adventurer never expects to revisit the land of his fathers, if he be of a reflective and tender spirit, what preparations does not this voyage demand; what objects does it not endear; what emotion does it not awaken! But 'when a few years are come,' (may *every* Christian say) when a few more anniversaries have glided by, what a voyage is in prospect for *me!* that vast and unknown voyage, whence, 'till the times of the restitution of all things,' I shall not return! not return to the seasons of sacred retirement, or social devotion, those golden hours to fit me for the skies; not return to that abode, where alone I can imitate my descended Lord, in doing and in suffering, where he found labours enough to occupy an untiring zeal, and to engage till the last moment of his sojourn a celestial benevolence." In the face of such

solemn anticipations, awakened by the prospect of our departure out of this world by death, next to a good hope, through grace, of an interest in the Redeemer, and an inheritance above, the expectation of a reunion with our glorified friends is cheering. How it tends to soothe and allay the agitations of the mind in the prospect of death, for the Christian to look to heaven as his *home;* where are already arrived, and where dwell, in perfection of bliss, those beloved by him on earth, and with whom he is there to be associated for ever! Many a weary and unpleasant journey we cheerfully take to enjoy the society of our friends; and shall we then tremble to pass the shadows of the grave, to bask with them for ever in the sunshine of the skies? Such a hope assures us, that though at death we enter on an untried state of existence, we shall not go among strangers; that the same event which separates us from friends dear to us on earth, will gather us to our own people in heaven.

What a delightful and powerful tendency has this hope to promote a spirit of mutual love and forbearance among the people of God. The causes of the alienation of affection and separation among Christians here, will be found in the imperfection of their present state and feelings.

Every thing which, in accordance with the supremacy of truth, has a tendency to unite Christians, and to contract the space of separation between them, should be dear to us. This expectation of knowing each other in heaven—of enjoying communion with our fellow-Christians there; not only with those with whom we were here most intimately connected, but with those also from whom we were too much separated, has a tendency more closely to unite us to them on earth. Did Christians live and act under the influence of this, little things would not operate as they do to cause separation and disunion. The prospect of everlasting fellowship with each other in heaven, would strengthen and sweeten their fellowship on earth. Were it possible for grief to be felt by glorified spirits above, would it not be excited by the recollection, that they acted with so much suspicion and unkindness towards each other on earth?

May it, my dear friend, be our daily privilege to live under the influence of this blessed hope. Let us delightfully anticipate the time when we shall see, in all his unveiled glories, that dear Redeemer, "whom having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:" when we shall see also,

shining in all the beauty and glory of a perfect conformity to their Lord, our dear departed friends, who are now with Christ where he is, and beholding his glory. "Now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him: *for we shall see him as he is.*"

LETTER VI.

THE HAPPINESS OF GLORIFIED SAINTS.

I FULLY accord with you, that one source of consolation, under the loss of pious friends, is meditation on the happiness of heaven, on the enjoyment of which they have entered. To the fact of the mutual recognition of glorified saints, and the influence it will exert on their felicity, I have devoted several letters, and with that I imagined I had completed the pleasant task you assigned me. You, however, desire me to renew the subject, by offering to you a more extended view of the happiness of heaven; a task this from which I might well shrink: for who, my friend, is equal to lift up the veil which hides from mortal views that world of light, and the bliss there enjoyed, without alloy and without interruption, by "the spirits of the just made perfect?" Though we are unable fully to comprehend, much less to describe,

the happiness of the glorified, yet it is not one of those "secret things" into which we are forbidden to pry: on the contrary, it is necessary, yea, natural for us, to meditate this high theme; inasmuch as it hath pleased God to reveal much respecting it in his word, where it is held up before us as "the prize of our high calling," to animate us to faith, patience, and perseverance in our Christian course.

To an individual about to take up his residence in a distant, and to him unknown country, no inquiries can be more interesting than those which relate to the nature of the country to which he is shortly to remove: the character, manners, and customs of its inhabitants with whom he will have to associate, and the facilities which his new situation is likely to afford for the advancement of his happiness. Should it happen that *all* his future days were to be passed in that distant and unknown land, with what intensity of interest would he prosecute these and similar inquiries! What joy to such a person to *converse* with one who had visited that far-off country! with what deeply-interested feelings would he sit down to peruse a book which purported to be a description of it! His imagination, excited by such inquiries, would often by night and by day present to his

mental vision the scenery, and associate him in habits, pursuits, and feelings, with the people of that land from which, as yet, vast oceans separate him.

Why should it not be thus with those who, in a short time, must leave for ever this world in which there is "no continuing city," for "a better country, that is, an heavenly?" How humbling the proof it affords of the depravity and downward tendency of our minds, that this is not the case with us! what an affecting evidence is herein presented of the baneful effects of the many influences of a worldly nature, by which we are continually assailed, and which possess so much power in counteracting and enfeebling those supernatural aspirations after heaven which divine grace has wrought in our souls! Most deeply is this to be deplored, not only as our minds are thus diverted from those heavenly contemplations which impart elevation to character, strength to faith, and animation to hope, but as robbing us of the noblest solace and support under the various trials of the present life. It is then only that we are able, with the inspired apostle, to regard our heaviest affliction as "*light*" and *momentary*, "*while* we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things

which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." *

To a serious and attentive student of the word of God, there will appear an instructive analogy in the mode by which God, under the Old Testament dispensation, taught believers, living under that economy, the nature and glories of the gospel dispensation; and that by which we, who live under the gospel, are taught the nature and glories of the heavenly state. In both cases, types and imagery, borrowed from the natural and moral world, are employed. In this mode of instruction, God condescends to human weakness and ignorance. Like children, whose opening capacities are limited, we are by *pictures* taught ideas of heavenly realities. While this method of divine instruction demands our gratitude, we must carefully guard against the abuse of it. There is no little danger of our giving to the figurative descriptions of heavenly blessedness, a too literal meaning; of resting satisfied with the *shadow*, instead of rising to the *substance*. The symbolical representations were intended to raise our minds to something transcendently spiritual and glorious, of which but for such helps we could have formed no distinct or worthy conceptions. Hav-

* 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

ing made these observations, I will come at once to the consideration of some general views of the happiness of glorified saints.

The happiness of heaven is a prepared blessedness for a prepared people. Many appear to think and speak of heaven as a glorious *place* of felicity, admission into which is alone necessary to secure their perfect blessedness, instead of regarding it as a holy and blessed *state*, prepared by God for those who love him, and who here are made "meet" for its enjoyment. There must be a holy congeniality between the soul and the bliss of heaven, to render it a source of enjoyment. It is because this is so much overlooked, that many indulge in anticipations which will never be realized. Are Christians sufficiently alive to the importance of this? We are assured, that not only the unrighteous and unholy *shall not*, but that they "*cannot*" enter the kingdom of heaven. Admit, for the sake of the illustration, that the divine restriction which bars the entrance of such into that happy world, were removed, it would appear, in the very nature of things, an impossibility for unholy and unpardoned souls to enter and enjoy the world of glorified spirits. It would need no cherubim, with flaming swords, to prevent their entrance into that state of perfect holiness:

their own sins, and overwhelming consciousness of unfitness for its enjoyments, would effectually bar their entrance there. Such would feel a total contrariety in their tempers, habits, and inclinations, to the spirit, employments, and habits of heaven. To bind an individual, even on earth, to a state of being from which all his moral habits revolt, would be to render him wretched: to do this by him, even in heaven, would be to bind him to misery, rather than to happiness. In heaven, the unholy soul could not feel in its proper element: he could not see God to his joy, because he is not "pure in heart:" the light which blazes from the eternal throne, in which holy spirits rejoice, would prove painful to his unholy vision, inasmuch as it would unveil to him, in its clear light, the guilt and pollution of his own unpardoned and unsanctified condition: holy spirits there would refuse communion with that soul, between whom and their God and Saviour there existed no communion and agreement: in the songs of praise sung by the glorified, he could not join—in their employments he could not unite—in their joys he could not sympathise. Hence the absolute necessity of that great moral change which is effected in spiritual regeneration—of that holiness of heart and life, advancing us

from one degree to another of moral conformity to Christ, on which the word of God so authoritatively insists. In this consists our *meekness* for heaven; without this we shall never taste the blessedness of glorified saints.

It is also important, as we would estimate aright the true nature of the happiness enjoyed by glorified saints, to bear in mind that it is happiness the *same, in nature and substance*, with that which the saints are privileged to enjoy on earth: it differs not in kind, but only in degree. The sacred Scriptures clearly describe the spiritual joys of Christians on earth, as the *earnest* and *foretaste* of that more full and perfect felicity which awaits them in heaven. Here they have the earnest, the first-fruits;—there they will receive the inheritance —the full harvest. Here they have the foretaste—there they shall enjoy the fulness. "He that believeth on the Son of God, *hath* everlasting life." He has not to wait till he arrive at heaven for it, but already *hath* it;—it is now begun in his soul—he is the subject of its animating principles and joys—his renewed soul feels the throbbings and the aspirations of that immortal life even here, the full vigour, expansion, and glory, of which he will know and enjoy hereafter. The enjoyments of the saints

on earth, as derived from the same source, are of the same nature, though vastly inferior in degree, with the joys of the glorified in heaven. There is one portion of Holy Scripture, which the more it is considered, the more will it confirm this view of the subject. The apostle says, "the kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost."* Are not these the natural expressions and fruits of vital religion, and so many sources of happiness to renewed souls *now*? It is only necessary that we carry forward our anticipations to the perfection of these attributes and enjoyments of real religion, and we have a just and correct view of the perfection and happiness of glorified saints; differing the one from the other, not in nature, but in degree only. Here the Christian feels his heaven begun "in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;" in the full and everlasting enjoyment of these blessings, he will hereafter find his heaven perfected. As the Jews in the wilderness ascertained the nature and excellency of the fruits of Canaan by the clusters brought them from Eshcol; so may we best ascertain the nature of heavenly felicity, by what the saints are permitted to experience in the present world. Imagine not,

* Rom. xiv. 17.

my dear friend, that this is to estimate the happiness of heaven by a low standard. The bliss which grows out of holiness, and communion with God and his people, is weak and interrupted here. Our remaining corruptions—the weakness of our faith and love—the limited nature of our capacities—the influence of the world, prejudicially affecting us in countless ways—and our own slothfulness,—all have a direct and powerful tendency, to hinder in their growth, and counteract in their influence, those holy principles and pleasures which are here the earnests and foretastes of heaven. Let but these hindrances be removed, and these counteracting influences cease, as they will in heaven, and the result will be a fulness and perfection of blessedness, worthy of God to bestow; sufficient to fill the most enlarged capacities of glorified spirits—as pure and elevated in its nature, as it will be everlasting in its duration.

This view of the happiness of heaven is important, from the influence which it should exert on our present conduct and pursuits, as well as on our expectations. Seeing the happiness of heaven is of the same nature with the spiritual happiness enjoyed by Christians on earth; then what hinders our enjoying more of *heaven* on earth? Why should we not labour and aspire

to realize the largest measure of heavenly felicity on this side the grave? Every nature hath its proper centre to which it tends as its rest and perfection. "True grace," as one judiciously remarks, "does not make some feeble essays towards heaven, but, by a mighty energy within itself, it is always soaring up higher and higher into heaven. It is not an airy speculation of heaven as a *thing to come*, that can satisfy a Christian's hungry desire, but the real possession of it in this life." He adds, "I wish there be not among some such, a light and poor esteem of heaven, as makes them more to seek after *assurance* of heaven, only in the *idea* of it, as *a thing to come*, than after *heaven itself*; which indeed we can never well be assured of, until we find it rising up within ourselves, and glorifying our own souls. When *true* assurance comes, heaven itself will appear upon the horizon of our souls like a morning light, chasing away all our dark and gloomy doubtings before it." How sad the proof presented of a low, sordid, and earthly spirit, that we do not daily aim at larger foretastes, and nearer approximations, to that perfect bliss of heaven, which is the true centre of rest, and source of happiness to the renewed soul. Thus to live on earth, realizing more of heaven in the soul

from day to day, and keeping it more in our views, would impart elevation to Christian character—would give to our converse a savor of heaven—adorn the life with the beauty of holiness—infuse a sweetness into the bitterest cup of human woe—keep us in a posture of readiness and expectation for the skies—and even, in a world of sorrows, produce joys unspeakable and full of glory. Let us not forget that greater abstraction of mind from the world—an increasing knowledge of God and Christ—a more entire submission to the divine will—more intimate communion with the Father of our spirits—more active zeal for the divine glory; as they are the results of such a life, so will they enable us to realize a larger measure of the bliss of heaven on this side the grave.

The happiness of heaven is not only that for which Christians are here prepared, and of which they here enjoy the earnest and foretaste, but it is a bliss divinely *prepared for them.* Hence it is described as that "which God hath *prepared* for them that love him." At the last great day, it will be said to the redeemed, "Inherit the kingdom *prepared* for you from the foundations of the world." What an idea does this representation give of the dignity and glory, of the bliss of the glorified in heaven, as

prepared by God for them; and from the foundations of the world. How free of any worthiness or merit in themselves! While enjoying it, what views will glorified spirits have of the boundless and sovereign riches of the divine mercy, in this glorious provision made for their everlasting happiness, before they had an existence; and from which, but for the grace of God, they had for ever barred themselves by their guilt and unworthiness! Such views as these will enhance the value and the sweetness of the happiness of heaven. Our blessed Lord, in his encouraging words to his disciples in the hour of separation, presents this attribute of the bliss of heaven, in a view peculiarly interesting—"I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself."* Leaving other views, suggested by this interesting announcement of the Redeemer, suffice it here, to observe, that Christ's entrance into heaven, and his exaltation as the glorified Saviour there, is in a peculiar sense the *preparation* of heavenly felicity to those who love him. The bliss of heaven, as will be shown, consists much in the presence of the glorified Saviour: without this, even heaven would prove a very

* John xiv. 2, 3.

unprepared place to the redeemed. I enter my friend's house to enjoy his society. I receive the cordial welcome of the family; but the friend I love and seek is not there! I behold those who love him—I see his well-known likeness—but all this availeth me not, because I see not, and converse not, with my friend himself. Thus it happens to the Christian at times in his attendance on divine ordinances. He comes to the house of God—he meets some of the spiritual family of his best friend—sits down at the feast of love which his divine friend hath appointed—he sees, in one and another, the likeness of his friend—but this mars the whole; he sees not, he enjoys not, the presence of his Saviour, and he says, "All this availeth me not, unless I see the King's face!" Thus would it be in heaven if Christ was not there; heaven would be an unprepared place to glorified saints. The glorified saint, on entering heaven, in that case might be supposed to say, "I perceive indeed that this is my Father's house: that these glorious mansions are those prepared by the Redeemer for those that love him: I see in every glorified spirit here, his likeness; but where is my Lord himself? All this light of glory—this glorious society—this bright mansion—these robes of light—this unfading

crown—will not satisfy me without my Lord and Saviour!" But there will be no such disappointment experienced in heaven. Our blessed Lord is there, according to his own assurance; and his presence there is the preparation of heaven for his saints, as it will be there to them a source of heavenly blessedness.

In the prospect of such a prepared happiness, how animating and consoling the assurance of our blessed Redeemer, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself!" He will not merely receive us into his Father's house, and into the society of holy angels and glorified saints, but *unto himself.* What a lovely idea does this give us of the happiness which the glorified saint realizes on its just entering heaven! An opinion prevailed among the Jews, at the time when our Lord was on earth, that when any of their nation died, they were received, on their entrance into heaven, by Abraham the father of their nation, who would welcome them on their arrival,—admit them to his friendship—and to a participation of his glories, and his joys. Hence in reference to this opinion, our Lord in parable represents Lazarus in heaven as lodged in Abraham's bosom. If, as is probable, Christ had a reference to this opinion, it gives an additional

force and beauty to his words—"I will come again, and *receive you unto myself*." He who is greater than Abraham, in the foresight of whose incarnation Abraham's heart leaped for joy, instead of employing the glorified Father of the faithful to do it, will *himself* receive his saints into heaven. They shall not be received into "Abraham's bosom," but into the warmer bosom of their glorified Saviour, "who loved them, and gave himself for them." We must experience this, to enable us to estimate aright the happiness of heaven included in it. Our blessed Lord will soon come at death, thus to receive us unto himself; let us await his coming in a posture of habitual preparation and expectation. He has thus already come and received our pious friends who have departed hence in the faith. Instead then of indulging regrets at their departing, let us rejoice that Christ has "received them *unto himself*."

"Why do we mourn departing friends?
Or shake at death's alarms?
'Tis but the voice that Jesus sends,
To call them to his arms."

LETTER VII.

SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

THE beatific vision and fruition of God and Christ, will prove a principal source of the happiness of glorified saints. To be capable of knowing and enjoying God, is one of the distinguishing peculiarities and glories of man, and can be affirmed of no other creature in this lower world. How is the soul mocked and debased, when man seeks to satisfy its enlarged desires with a low, sordid, and earthly bliss—when he prostitutes to sensual delights and worldly pursuits, those noble powers with which the Father of spirits has so richly endowed him, and which can attain only to their true elevation and bliss in the knowledge and fruition of God himself! "*This*, said Christ, is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God,

and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."* In the degree in which we attain to this on earth, we *commence* the happiness of heaven; the perfection of it hereafter, will be the *fullness* of heavenly enjoyment. To know, to see, and to enjoy God, is the happiness of the glorified above. It was this which David anticipated,—"As for me I shall behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."† This was the blessedness promised to "the pure in heart;" "they shall *see* God."‡ This was what Christ prayed for; "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me, where I am, that they may behold my glory."§ It was this which the beloved disciple anticipated; "We shall be like *Him*, for we shall *see* him as he is."‖

In the present state, by reason of our many imperfections, and the weakness of our capacities, we are incapable of the full display of the divine glory. We cannot gaze upon the sun without a sense of pain; its brightness proves too powerful for our weak vision. Much less could we endure the unveiled effulgence of the Godhead, compared with one beam of which the meridian glory of the brightest sun is but

* John xvii. 3. † Ps. xvii. 15. ‡ Matt. v. 8.
§ John xvii. 24. ‖ 1 John iii. 2.

as dimness itself. Moses knew not what he asked, when he prayed, "Lord, show me *thy glory*." The answer of God to him, shows that the divine concealment of that glory from mortal eyes, is in compassion to human weakness—"Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live."* Even those manifestations which Christ, after his exaltation, made of himself to some, in his glorified humanity, proved too powerful for them to endure, to whom he granted them.† But to glorified saints, not only is the veil drawn aside which hides from us the divine glory, but that enlargement of capacity is granted, which enables them to behold the unclouded glories of God and the Lamb. They see God as *he* is. The nature and effects of this beatific vision of God are well expressed by the excellent Dr. Bates: "Sight is the most spiritual and noble sense, that gives the most distinct and evident discovery of its objects. The soul, in its exalted state, *sees the King in his beauty*—all the perfections of that infinitely glorious and blessed nature, in their brightness and purity. And this sight causes the most ardent love, by which there is an intimate and vital union between

* Exodus xxxiii. 20.

† Acts ix. 3—xxii. 6—11. Rev. 13—17.

the soul and its happiness; and from hence springs perfect delight: in thy presence is fullness of joy. It expels all evil, that would embitter and lessen our felicity. And this is an admirable privilege for the human nature, that is so sensible of trouble. If the light of the sun be so pleasant, that every morning revives the world, and renders it new to us, which was buried in the darkness of the night, how infinitely pleasant will the light of glory be, that discovers the absolute and universal excellency of the Deity, the beauty of his holiness, the perfection of his wisdom, the greatness of his power, and the riches of his mercy."

Not only do glorified saints see and enjoy the glory of the eternal God, but they enjoy also the beatific vision of their glorified Redeemer. They are with Him where he is, and behold his glory. Not only do they see Christ as he is, in his essential glory, but as invested with all that glory which was *given* to him by his Father, as the recompense of his wonderful humiliation and achievements, in the great work of redemption. It was for this the Son of God prayed, when the season of his last sufferings drew nigh;* this was "the joy set before him," for which "he endured the cross,

* John xvii. 1.

despising the shame,"* and to which He is now exalted in the heavenly world.† The spirits of the just made perfect behold this glory of the Son of God. They see him in the glory of his person. Though there was little or no glory in the personal appearance of Christ while he was on earth, it is far otherwise with him now he is in heaven. We may form some faint idea of the glory of Christ in heaven, from the manifestations made of his personal glory on Mount Tabor, and to the Apostle Paul at his conversion, and the beloved disciple John, in vision at Patmos. Glorified saints now behold that countenance once marred and disfigured by grief and suffering, shining with a glory beyond the sun at noon-day: they see all the glories of his divinity shining through his glorified humanity, like the sun through a thin intervening cloud; on that head which a thorny coronet once lacerated, they behold many diadems of glory; the hand which once held the mock sceptre, now holding the sceptre of universal empire; the government of the world upon the shoulders which once sustained the weight of the cross: they behold *him*, whom men rejected and mocked, the object of the unceasing praises and worship of heaven; they see the glory of all his attributes, as displayed

* Heb. xii. 2. † Phil. ii. 8—11.

in creation, providence, and redemption;—the results of his redeeming love in his triumphs over sin, death, and hell, and in the vast and increasing multitudes redeemed to God by his blood.

The beatific vision which glorified saints have of God and Christ in heaven, is *unclouded.* Every thing which now hides from them, or which incapacitates them for that glorious vision, is taken away; they see not now as here, "through a glass darkly," but "face to face." It is *uninterrupted.* Often on earth did they mourn the hidings of God's face, the interruption of their communion with Him whom their souls love, but now they see and enjoy God and Christ without interruption, and for *ever.* This will fill and satisfy the most enlarged capacities of glorified spirits for ever. What an exalted view does this give us of the happiness of heaven! Well might Dr. Owen, in his dying moments, when informed that his celebrated work, "On the Glory of Christ," was gone to press, exclaim, "The long-wished-for day is come at last, in which I shall see that glory in another manner, than I have ever done yet, or was capable of doing in this world!"

Most intimately connected with this, is another particular of the happiness of glorified

saints—their complete conformity and assimilation to Christ. This is stated in sacred Scripture, as the *effect* of the beatific vision of Christ—"We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." This assimilation to Christ commences *here*. The apostle Paul speaks of it as the effect of spiritual acquaintance with the Saviour—"We all with open face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."* There is a natural tendency in the mind of man, to take a complexion from, and assimilate itself to, the objects or persons with which it most frequently and delightfully converses. The personal intercourse which the disciples held with Christ, produced such a peculiar and visible transformation of character in them, that their enemies "marvelled," and "took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."† This transformation of character, which, in the degree in which it existed, was a resemblance to Christ, was evidently heightened and improved by the clearer and more spiritual views they possessed of the glory of Christ, after the descent of the Holy Spirit. It is the same in reference to believers now. The glory of Christ, discovered by the spiritual eye, becomes in the

* 2 Cor. iii. 18. † Acts iv. 13.

soul of the Christian an animating and transforming principle, producing a moral and increasing resemblance to the likeness of the Saviour. This has been somewhat happily illustrated by an allusion to the sun. The sun no sooner arises and shines, than, by its diffusive and vital splendour, it transforms what before was a region of darkness, into a region of light, and thus in a measure changes it into its own likeness. But though some here attain to greater degrees of resemblance to Christ than others—and every Christian should aim at the highest degree—yet how very imperfect is this resemblance, even in the best! It will in heaven be complete. "If the imperfect and dim sight of Christ's divine virtues in the gospel, hath a power to change the believer into his *image from glory to glory*, how much more the vision of his unveiled face! Our graces here, are but as the rude draught and first colours of the divine image, that shall then be in its perfection. We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." The beatific vision of the glory of Christ, which bursts upon the soul, on its first entrance into heaven, transforms it at once into that perfect likeness to the Saviour in holiness, which was here the object of its pursuits and prayers. What a source of happiness must this prove to glorified saints! To be holy is to

be happy. The angels are perfect in bliss, because they are perfect in holiness. There are no pleasures on earth, which can compare with those which connect with, and arise out of holiness. If holiness here, in a world so uncongenial to its growth, be productive of so much real pleasure and satisfaction, what exalted pleasure and satisfaction must it impart to glorified saints, who have attained to its perfection, who, while they see Christ as he is, in his unveiled glory, feel and know that they are like him!

I delight, my dear friend, to think of heaven as a state of happiness adapted by God to the moral nature of man. Man is endowed with active powers and tendencies, the exercise and gratification of which is essential to his felicity. The ever-blessed God, in his dealings with man in this world—in the bliss which he imparts, as also in that which He has placed within the power of human attainment, regards this peculiarity of man's nature. There is no reason to think it will be otherwise in heaven

To conceive of heaven as a mere state of *recipiency*, or of *mere quiescent enjoyment*, does not accord either with the active nature of the powers of man, or with the representations which the sacred Scriptures make of heavenly

blessedness. We shall arrive at more correct and enlarged ideas of the happiness of heaven, by considering it under the view here suggested.

God has endowed man with an intellectual capacity. The desire of knowledge is one of the active principles of his moral constitution. To what intellectual efforts has this desire prompted man! What stores of knowledge has it enabled him to accumulate! Here, however, knowledge is limited—a variety of circumstances, at present operate to bound and restrain the powers of intellect. The close union between soul and body is of this nature, as the latter in various ways acts as a check on the soul, in its pursuit of knowledge. Our powers, at best, are but weak. There are mysteries in nature, providence, and redemption, the full development of which God has, for important ends, reserved for a future state. In heaven, the glorified spirit is unfettered by the body; there its intellectual capacity attains to its full expansion; and as it finds itself placed in circumstances most favourable to its attainment, so does much of the happiness of the glorified saint arise out of the pursuit and acquisition of perfect knowledge. The words of the apostle place this matter before us in a most interesting light. "For we know in part, and we prophecy

in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For *now* we see through a glass darkly; but *then* face to face; *now* I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known."* How beautiful and instructive this contrast between the imperfection of Christian knowledge here, and the perfection of it enjoyed by the glorified in heaven! There, is knowledge without ignorance—and all truth without error. Here, in many instances, the truth of Solomon's observation is verified—"He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow;" but there, its increase will produce only satisfaction and joy, pure, unmixed, and everlasting. How great a source of happiness must this prove to glorified saints, to whom, as their knowledge advances, it will be a continued increase of their glorified bliss.

Among the objects of the knowledge of glorified saints, next to God and Christ, which have been already noticed, it is reasonable to suppose that the works of God will engage their attention and study. *The works of nature* will be a source of information to the glorified

* 1 Cor. xiii. 9—12.

"The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." The perfection of glorified saints in holiness, and their supreme delight in God, will not only qualify them for, but constrain them to contemplate the works of God with a zest of which they felt but little here. In every page and line of the volume of nature, spread open before them, they read and admire the power, the wisdom, and the benevolence of their God. How small a portion of the creation of God now comes within the range of our observation! We gaze upon the world stretching in so much beauty around us;—we look upwards to the heavens spreading in grandeur above us; by the aid of philosophy we conjecture that the lights of heaven are worlds, and suns, the centres of systems; but, after all, we are constrained to confess our ignorance of the extent of creation, and say, "Lo! these are but parts of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him! but the thunder of his power who can understand!"* There is reason to believe, that glorified saints, standing on their vantage ground for surveying the works of God, and with vastly improved and glorified capacities, will have clear perceptions of the nature and the extent of the whole creation of God. It is reasonable to suppose, that glorified

* Job xxvi. 14.

spirits, disencumbered from bodies, may possess powers of locomotion, of which at present we have no conception; which may enable them, with the swiftness of light, to wing their flight to the unnumbered worlds in the boundless empire of their God; there to trace new views of the power, wisdom, and benevolence of their Almighty Creator. In all these glorious works, whether great or small, they see a father's hand. The wisdom which contrived—the power that made—the goodness which replenished—and the harmony which pervades, the whole, will increase their admiration and love of God, and thus prove to them a source of perpetually growing bliss.

The providence of God is no less the subject of their study, and a source of intellectual enjoyment to glorified saints. What a source of perplexity is the providence of God to us now! The plans, procedures, and designs, of the *infinite* God, in providence, must in many instances be above the comprehension of our *finite* minds. It should satisfy us, that "the Judge of all the earth will do right;" and, though we cannot walk the mysterious circle in which God moves on to the accomplishment of his purposes, we have the most ample assurance in his word, that he acts according to a vast plan, which his

wisdom has devised; the result of which will be, to manifest the glory of all his perfections. To glorified saints, all the mysteries of providence are revealed in a light which constrains them to say, "He hath done all things well!" They see, that events, which here appeared to them *contingent*, were under the special control of God; that what appeared to them at the time contrary to the nature and government of God, were so many links in an unbroken chain of divine purposes, stretching from the beginning to the end of time; how, other events, which appeared only calamitous to the church, and to the world, were designed and overruled for good. In a word, glorified saints see, and fully comprehend, that delightful assurance which it was their comfort here to believe—"All things *work together* for *good* to them that love God."* "Every being and event will appear to have been known and chosen from the beginning, and to have been a proper part of a perfect system. It will be seen that nothing was defective, and nothing superfluous; that sparrows fell to the ground, and that the hairs of our head were numbered, according to the dictates of infinite wisdom. In a word, reasons of sufficient importance will be disclosed, why every

* Rom. viii. 28.

thing was as it actually has been; and why the universe was not formed of different materials, or conducted in a different manner."

Of the volume of divine providence, unfolded to glorified saints, no part proves more instructive and interesting, than that which relates to the moral history of themselves as individuals. Herein, they see all the way clearly marked out by which God led them through the wilderness to heaven their "better country." Many events in their individual history, which at the time proved painful and mysterious, are here cleared up to their satisfaction, and awaken in them feelings of gratitude and joy. They perceive that on events seemingly accidental and trivial, hinged consequences important to their happiness—how they were thus led into those connexions and circumstances which so greatly influenced their subsequent comfort and usefulness in this world—how, by painful dispensations, which they could not explain at the time, they were improved in Christian virtues and restrained from many evils—how, by the loss of some earthly delights, God secured their affections to himself—how, by hedging up their way with thorns, he prevented their wandering in those dangerous paths which would have conducted them only to guilt and sorrows. In

a word, glorified saints, in the study of providence, see and admire the "manifold wisdom" of God, his fidelity to his promises, and the constancy of his love and care, in securing their best and eternal interests. What a source of exalted blessedness must this prove to glorified saints!

There is one subject, of all others the most interesting, the contemplation of which will occupy the attention of glorified saints, and minister to their happiness—*redemption by Christ.* "Into these things the angels desire to look." If angels, with the superior acuteness of intellect which they possess, find in the wonders of redemption that which has occupied their delightful study for thousands of years, with what delight must glorified saints meditate this high theme, who have been redeemed to God by the blood of his Son! Admitted, as they doubtless are, to the high honour of personal intercourse with their glorified Redeemer, they receive from his own lips the most perfect knowledge of himself, of his Father, of the great work of redemption he accomplished for them, of its vast extent and glorious results. If when our Lord on earth explained to two of his disciples the types and predictions of Moses and the prophets, "concerning himself," and his work of redemp-

tion, it proved so delightfully animating to their hearts,* what knowledge and bliss must glorified saints derive from personal intercourse with their glorified Redeemer on this glorious theme! That they are thus instructed by Christ, appears most probable from the words, "The Lamb in the midst of the throne shall feed them." † Knowledge is the food of the mind—glorified knowledge is the food of glorified spirits. The redeemed above have more exalted knowledge than they could attain here, of the dignity of the Redeemer, of the value of the blood he shed for their ransom, of the true nature and extent of the sufferings he endured, of the evils from which, and of the blessings to which, they were thus redeemed. And how exalted must be their views of the results of redeeming love! They see what glory has thus been brought to all the attributes of Deity—what influence it exerts on the happiness of angels, and how vast the extent of its efficacy. Here the *extent* of redeeming love was to them at times matter of speculation, whether its efficacy was confined to our world alone, or whether it extends to other worlds and beings who inhabit them, were questions which they could not solve on earth. But all is revealed to them *now*. What a theme for

* Luke xxiv. 32. † Rev. vii. 17.

the untiring exercise of glorified powers is redemption by Christ! As the results of it are developed on earth, as redeemed spirits from our world arrive among them, their knowledge of it, and the joys which they derive from that knowledge, increase and abound. Is it not clear from these hints, which might be easily extended, and applied to other subjects, which the glorified will study, that the untiring pursuit and attainment of the knowledge of God, of Christ, creation, providence, and redemption, will constitute in no small measure the employment and happiness of glorified saints.

Let us, my dear friend, aim at growth in divine knowledge. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord."—"Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now we know in part, but then shall we know as also we are known."

LETTER VIII.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

AMONG the arguments adduced in favour of the doctrine of the mutual recognition of glorified saints, was one arising out of the social nature of man. Without repeating what has been already stated, it is reasonable to assume, that the happiness of heaven, as adapted to the moral constitution of man, will in no small degree arise out of the enjoyment of glorified society. There "the communion of saints" is perfected. How delightful to think of heaven, as the world where friendship is perfect, and where all are friends! When those dear to us remove to some distant locality on earth, how anxious are we to learn that they are settled among *friends!* How then should this thought console us, under painful bereave-

ments, that the departed saints we loved, are in that world where in every angel and glorified spirit they have found and enjoy a friend. Ask you, to what society they are united? I reply, in the animating language of the inspired apostle, they are come "to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant."* In that "great multitude which no man can number, of all nations and kindreds, and people and tongues," are the first parents of the human race,—righteous Abel, Enoch—all the pious patriarchs, kings, prophets, priests, and saints of the Old Testament Church. With them are associated the apostles, the noble army of the martyrs and confessors, and the countless believers of the New Testament Church; who have arrived there, from every variety of circumstance, clime, and nation, under heaven. Those who compose this glorious society are all holy. They put off, with their mortal bodies, whatever imperfections they had on earth, and now, without spot or blemish, "they stand before the throne of God, having washed their

* Heb. xii. 22—24.

robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."* No glorified saint there, has to mourn over imperfections in another; but each admires in the other, a perfect conformity to Christ. The most perfect and delightful union pervades the whole of that blessed society. No private interests, no little jealousies, no difference in opinions respecting truth or church polity, as now, separate them from each other. Those things which here unhappily operate as bars to communion, and alienate Christian from Christian, are there unknown. The perfect light of heaven has corrected all mistakes,—the perfect love of heaven has annihilated for ever every feeling hostile to union. Though innumerable, the glorified above are all *one*—of one mind, of one glorious family, the trophies of the love of one Redeemer, to whose likeness they are now completely conformed, and to whose praise they unite in singing one ceaseless song. Selfishness, which is here the bane of social bliss, is unknown among them; every one there has learned, and fully exemplifies, the second great command of the moral law, and "loves his neighbour as himself." It is reasonable to suppose, that the bliss of such a society is promoted and advanced by their social inter-

* Rev. vii. 14.

course. "A society," observes the amiable Cowper, "without social intercourse, seems to be a solecism and a contradiction in terms." Each there will be willing to receive, and as able and willing to impart, some information in reference to the providence and the grace of God, which will add to the knowledge and the joys of the rest. To these things, it may be added, this glorious society is perpetually increasing, by fresh arrivals of redeemed spirits from earth; it is a society from which one will never depart, either by apostacy or death. What a source of bliss must this prove to glorified saints!

We have sufficient reason for believing, that in heaven, as on earth, much of the happiness realized will arise from active employments. In addition to those already noticed, we add, that glorified saints are employed in the worship of the Lamb; and that hence arises no small measure of their heavenly felicity. To glorify God, and that natural expression of it which is rendered in acts of divine worship, is an employment as proper for heaven as for earth. All those sacred feelings and emotions, which blend and combine to render the worship of God delightful and acceptable now, exist in perfection and have their full expansion in heaven. Had Holy Scripture been silent on this subject, we

should naturally have inferred, that the worship of God, so essential to man, and a source of the purest pleasure to him on earth, would exist in heaven and be there perfected and perpetuated. That this is the case is abundantly evident from the word of God. With immediate reference to this, the followers of Christ are said to be made by him, "Kings and priests unto God."* Heaven itself is described as the "*temple*" of God, in which glorified saints "serve him day and night."† How interesting is the view here given of heaven—"*the temple of God.*" Other temples are reared by man; but the celestial temple, is that which God himself has reared and prepared for his glorified worshippers. We are accustomed to form exalted ideas of the glory of Solomon's temple, adorned by the skill and wealth, not of the Jews alone, but of other nations; its beams and rafters of cedar, in every part shining with burnished gold, and precious stones. But the temple of Solomon has no glory when compared with the exceeding glory of the heavenly temple. The one was made of perishable materials, and has long ceased to exist; the other is a temple "not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." It is the presence of God which constitutes the true glory of a tem-

* Rev. i. 6. † Rev. vii. 15.

ple. This was the glory of Solomon's temple, the divine glory, by filling it, took possession of it at its dedication.* The Shecinah, the visible glory, which hovered over the mercy-seat in its "Holy of Holies," proclaimed a present Deity. This is the glory of the celestial temple—"*God is there!*" There no glorified worshipper has ever to complain and say, "The glory is departed!" What mind of mortal man can rise to the full comprehension of the following description of heaven—"The Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb are the temple thereof."†

If from the temple we direct attention to the glorified worshippers there employed, and to the worship which they render to God and the Lamb, we shall discover what is no less animating. There is "an innumerable company of angels," and innumerable multitudes of the redeemed from earth, from all ages, nations, kindreds, and tongues under heaven. What is the precise nature or extent of the worship which the glorified offer to God, we are unable fully to conceive. There, those humbling confessions of guilt which repentance inspires, and those prayers which are now poured forth under a consciousness of sin and many wants, are unnecessary, though they form so considerable a part of our

* 1 Kings viii. 10, 11. † Rev. xxi. 22.

worship now. The worship in which the glorified are engaged in the celestial temple, consists, we have reason to believe, for the most part, in adoring love, gratitude, and praise. "I beheld," said John, "and lo! a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving, and honour and power and might, be unto our God for ever, Amen."* Every glorified saint, as constituted by Christ a "priest unto God," is unceasingly employed in presenting unto God this pure and fragrant oblation of adoration, gratitude, and love. How delightful is the worship thus performed, not through the medium of ordinances as here, but direct, and in the immediate presence of the Deity, to whom it is addressed. There is no want of fitness for its performances, no coldness of affection,

* Rev. vii. 9—12.

no vain or wandering thoughts to obstruct or mar the holy joys which arise out of it. The harp of praise is never unstrung,—with its heavenly melodies, the heart is ever in unison. This worship of the celestial temple is not, like ours on earth, liable to interruptions, but is unceasing and everlasting. Now our feeble bodies require rest—"the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." This will equally apply to our minds, which, incapable of long-continued application and excitement, require rest also. Even that portion of time which we devote to religious worship, is liable to many inroads and interruptions. The cares of the world, and other thoughts, follow us to the closet and the temple, and distract our minds, and pollute and interrupt our devotions. These things, like heavy weights, press down to earth the soul, which on the wings of holy affections would rise to God. But glorified spirits are freed from all these interruptions. As pure and disembodied spirits, they have no clog of mortal flesh to check their holy ardours—their heavenly minds, freed from all restraints, and enlarged in all their capacities, never flag or tire in the service of their God. Heaven is to them an unending sabbath—from the temple of their God they never go out—the unceasing and untiring wor-

ship of God and the Lamb, is to them a well-spring of joy ever new and ever abounding.

We are here the creatures of expectation, and hope may well be called the elixir of life. Our happiness springs not only from the good which we already possess, but from the pleasing hope and expectation of that which is to come. There is no reason for believing it will be otherwise in heaven. As the fearful looking for of "wrath to come" is a perpetual aggravation of the misery of lost souls, so also is the delightful expectation of glory and bliss to come a source of increasing happiness to glorified saints. We must not infer from this that glorified saints have any thing like a painful feeling of defect or privation of blessedness: they are fully satisfied with the divine goodness. Such however is the munificence of the infinite goodness of God; so gradual the accomplishment of the divine purposes in providence and grace, in the development of which the inhabitants of heaven are deeply interested, that these things to them will be the sublime objects of hope and the sources of increasing joys.

We may illustrate this by a reference to matters of fact. The happiness of glorified saints *has* been of a progressive nature, the object and

accomplishment of their celestial hopes. By a succession of glorious events which have taken place in the church below, both their knowledge and their joys have been increased. We are not always to regard as mere hyperbolical language those passages of holy Scriptures which represent the "heavens" as rejoicing with the "earth" in the triumphs of truth and righteousness in our world, but as really descriptive of the joys which these triumphs occasion among the glorified. Among the events which have been objects of the hope, and in their accomplishment the causes of the increasing happiness of glorified spirits, we may justly give prominence to the manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh; the accomplishment of his great work of redemption; his ascension, and exaltation in heaven. What a spring of increasing information and bliss must these grand events have proved, especially to those glorified saints who had lived under the Old Testament, and to whom they were objects of faith and hope. By the appearance of the Son of God in human flesh, was made manifest to them the divine purposes which had been hidden from the foundation of the world: here they saw the unparalleled love of God towards our fallen world in its noon-tide splendour, of which they

had comparatively but faint glimpses before:—in the humiliation, sufferings, and vicarious death of the Redeemer; in his conflict with, and glorious victory over, all the enemies of God's glory and man's salvation; amidst the ignominy and apparent weakness of his cross, they saw the fulfilment of types and predictions, which had excited their hopes and awakened their joys. The appearance of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and his accomplishment of the great work of human redemption, doubtless became an important epoch in heaven as on earth, from which commenced a more glorious dispensation of knowledge and blessedness. The ascension and exaltation in heaven of the Redeemer as "Lord of all," as invested with "all power in heaven and earth," must doubtless have produced a mighty influx of joy to glorified saints. "The return of a great and beloved prince," observes an excellent writer, "who should, by only hazarding his life, have saved his country, would fill a nation with ecstacy. Their conversation in every company would turn upon him, and all their thoughts and joys concentrate in him. See, then, the King of kings, after having by death abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light; after spoiling the powers of darkness,

and ruining all their schemes, see *him* return in triumph! There was something like triumph when he entered into Jerusalem; the city was moved, saying, '*Who is this?*' and the multitude answered, It is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth; and the very children sung, Hosanna to the son of David: blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord: hosanna in the highest! How much greater then must be the triumph of his entry into the heavenly Jerusalem! Would not all the city *be moved* in this case, saying, '*Who is this?*' See thousands of angels attending him, and ten thousand times ten thousand come forth to meet him! The entrance of the ark into the city of David was but a shadow of this, and the responsive strains which were sung on that occasion would on this be much more applicable."* Is it not evident from these facts, as also from the fact which has been before noticed, that "there is joy in heaven at the repentance of every sinner;" that the happiness of glorified saints is and has been of a progressive nature, and the accomplishment of their celestial hopes?

Admitting this to be the case, is it then too much to assert, that glorified saints are still the subjects of hopes and expectations, which

* Ps. xxiv. 7—10.

are to them so many springs of enjoyment, and the accomplishment of which will be the increase of their happiness? Even their exalted Lord and Saviour is himself the subject of sublime hopes and *expectations*.* He *expects* the full reward of all his sufferings and achievements, which was "the joy set before him for which he endured the cross, despising the shame."† And shall then the existence of hope, in the bosoms of glorified saints, be considered inconsistent with the perfection of that blessedness on which they have already entered? Rather, are not these sublime hopes the sources and causes of increasing blessedness? They doubtless hope to greet the arrival among them of those pious friends whom they left behind them on earth, and those also over whose conversion to God they have rejoiced in heaven. It is clear also from what John beheld in the sublime visions of the apocalypse, that they take a lively interest, and feel peculiar joy, in the prevalence of Christianity in the world, and its triumph over those powers which have so long impeded its progress. In one vision the beloved disciple represents the glorified martyrs as desiring and hoping for the destruction

* Heb. x. 12, 13. † Heb. xii. 2.

‡ Rev. vi. 9, 10.

of mystic Babylon, which had made herself drunk "with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus."* And in another vision he represents the jubilee of joy which the final downfall of that anti-christian power will occasion in the heavenly world.† It is clear, from these descriptions, that these events are known in heaven; that they are the objects of the desires and hopes of glorified saints, and that they will augment their felicity. They know also, from the faithful promises of God, that the Redeemer's kingdom is one day to be universally established on earth, and it is for this reason principally that they rejoice in the final overthrow of every Anti-christian power opposed to it. From their lofty point of observation, they mark how the holy leaven of gospel truth is leavening the great mass of society; they see the light of a glorious day breaking upon different parts of the world, which have long been "sitting in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death." These discoveries augment their joys, and raise their hopes of the nearer and certain approach of that glorious day, when "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ." If the repentance and sub-

* Rev. xvii. 6. † Rev. xix. 1—9.

mission of a single sinner to Christ is to glorified spirits a fresh influx of joy, what a mighty augmentation of their blessedness, and consummation of their hopes, will be the arrival of that period, when to their exalted Redeemer "every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father:"*—when this lower world, emancipated from all the effects of the curse on account of man's depravity, shall, by the transforming influence of a Redeemer's love, become "the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness!"†

The second coming of our Lord and Saviour is insisted on in sacred Scripture as a great and glorious event, which is to have a mighty influence on the happiness of the redeemed. This is the time appointed by God for the more glorious exaltation and manifestation of the glory of his Son. "The glory which accompanied his first appearing, eclipsed every thing which had gone before it. But the glory which shall be revealed on his second appearing will be greater still; and the increase of celestial happiness will transcend every thing which eye hath seen, or ear heard, or which it hath entered into the heart of man to conceive." We

* Phil. ii. 10. † 2 Pet. iii. 13.

are taught to believe, that there is a degree, an accumulation of "*grace to be brought unto the saints* at the revelation of Jesus Christ,"* superior to any thing they enjoyed on earth, or now enjoy in heaven. Christ is then to be beheld in a glory surpassing every thing which even the blessed are now able to conceive or behold, for "He will then come to be *glorified* in his saints, and *admired* in all them that believe."† It will be "*the revelation* of Jesus Christ!" "*the glorious appearing* of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ!"‡ These and similar expressions, clearly teach us that a glory will then be revealed, and a happiness enjoyed, which will far transcend every thing that has preceded it. This, glorified saints hope and wait for, and the anticipation of it proves an augmentation of their bliss. They know that their Redeemer is exalted to be the Judge of the living and the dead, and that he will one day appear in that character in "his own glory, and in the glory of his Father, and all his holy angels;" that, though he has left the world for a season, he has not finally abandoned it, but designs to revisit it for wise pur-

* 1 Pet. i. 13. † 2 Thess. i. 10.

‡ Titus ii. 13. "επιφάνειαν τῆς δόξης του μεγαλου Θεου και σωτῆρος Ἰησου χριστου."

poses, and " will stand upon the earth at the latter day;* that he will then manifest the full glory of all his attributes and works, to the gaze of the assembled universe—reap the full harvest of his sufferings, victories, and intercessions;—raise the dead—finish the mystery of God—emancipate the whole creation from the bondage of corruption—complete the salvation of his church, and " present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."† With what raised hopes do glorified saints, glowing with all the inextinguishable ardours of celestial love to Jesus, desire that day, when He who once came to earth to obey and suffer, will come and make it the theatre of his glory and triumphs: when he who came, by the price of blood, to purchase his church and the dominion of the world, shall come and take full possession of his purchase: when he who, as our great High Priest, made his soul an offering for the sins of millions, and whom they now behold in heaven, the Holy of holies, presenting and pleading its merits on their behalf before God, having completed his work within the veil, shall come forth in his brightest robes of priesthood and glory, to pronounce his everlasting benediction on his

* Job xix. 25. † Eph. v. 27.

universal church.* The expectation of all this is matter of delightful hope and increasing joy to glorified saints. With what joy do they animate each other's hopes, saying, "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory!"†

The resurrection of the body is one, among the glorious events of Christ's "appearing," to which glorified saints look forward with delighted hope. Man is a compound being—it is the union of body and soul which makes the man. They, therefore, who believe the immortality and happiness of the disembodied soul, and deny the resurrection of the body, forget *the man*. It is not only clear from the word of God, that the body shall be raised, but it is revealed with equal clearness, that the reunion of the risen and glorified body, with the glorified soul, is necessary to the complete redemption and happiness of glorified saints. The bodies, as well as the souls of his people, are the purchase of the Redeemer's blood; hence the apostle's exhortation, "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's."‡ These bodies of his saints, which he has so dearly purchased, he

* Heb. ix. 24. † Col. iii. 4. ‡ 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

consecrates as the temples of the Holy Ghost, and uses their members as instruments to advance his own glory. Had holy Scripture been silent on this subject, we should reasonably have inferred, that after having redeemed the bodies of his saints by his own blood, consecrated them as temples of his Spirit, and used them as instruments for his own glory, Christ would not abandon them, and cast them aside for ever at death, as worthless things. The word of God, however, is not silent on this interesting topic; its testimony fully assures us that Christ will ransom this part of his purchased possession from the power of the grave. It was to this the apostle referred when he addressed the Christians at Ephesus in these words, "Ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."* It was to this our blessed Lord pointed as the will of his Father, and the consummation of his work—"this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose *nothing*, but should raise it up again at the last day."†

What a glory does this shed over the Chris-

* Eph. i. 13, 14. † John vi. 39.

tian's grave! What, though no monument, reared by affection, mark the spot which the green sod covers, and over which thoughtless youth sport, yet beneath that lowly hillock slumbers dust dear to the Redeemer, and bought with his own blood; it is not cast away by him, as that in which he hath no pleasure, but like a precious jewel locked up in the grave as in a safe casket, till he shall come again to receive it unto himself. It may be forgotten among men, but it is not forgotten by Christ, who watches over its slumbers with greater constancy and tenderness than the fondest mother watches over her lovely sleeping babe. Time, the rapid flight of which the sleeping dust of his saints feel not, is bearing onward that glorious day when the Redeemer, who has the keys of hell and of death, will come and call upon the sleeping bodies of his saints to arise, and every atom of their dust shall hear his voice and live, and these bodies, quickened and transformed by his almighty power, shall become powerful, spiritual, incorruptible, immortal bodies, and as meet companions, reunited with their glorified spirits, shall participate with them for ever in the joys of heaven. It is towards this glorious consummation of the happiness of glorified spirits, the apostle, employing

a well known figure of rhetoric, describes universal creation as bending forward with intense desire and hope, "waiting for the adoption, to wit, *the redemption of the body.*"*

This is an object of hope and a source of enjoyment to glorified saints. Their bodies, once their companions in spiritual services, conflicts, sorrows, and joys, they have left behind to slumber in the grave: but these essential and dear parts of themselves they still regard with heavenly affections. They know that they rest in hope, and under promise of a glorious resurrection, that their happy spirits will one day be clothed upon again with these bodies, not as they once were, but changed into glorious, powerful, incorruptible, spiritual, and immortal bodies. It is to this "*change*," rather than to that which takes place at death, to which the term has been generally appropriated, that suffering Job looked forward, when he said, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait till *my change* come."† He had at the time when

* Rom. viii. 19—23.

† חליפתי The septuagint thus renders the Hebrew text, "εως αν παλιν γενωμαι." The same Hebrew word which signifies change by *renovation*, occurs Ps. xc. 5, 6, where it is used to denote the springing again of grass

he thus spoke, a body sinking under weakness and pain—rendered offensive to himself and others by a loathsome disease;—he looks to the grave, and desires that God would hide him there. Amidst these reflections, the thought of a resurrection of the body springs up in his mind to cheer his prospects; and he exults in the hope that this body of his, now so weak and offensive, will undergo a glorious change, when his "living Redeemer" shall call upon it to shake off the slumbers of the grave, and revive it a glorious body. In his glorified state his emancipated spirit would thus await and expect all his appointed time, until this his glorious change should come, till Christ shall redeem his body from the power of the grave.* Such also is the delightful hope and expectation of every glorified saint. Permit me, my dear friend, to employ on this delightful topic the words of the incomparable Howe. "This waiting carries in it a desirous expectation of some additional good, which therefore must needs add to the satisfaction and blessedness of the expecting soul. And wherein it may do so, is not altogether unapprehensible. Admit that a soul,

after it had withered—an expressive emblem of the resurrection.

* Job xiv. 7—15.

had it never been embodied, might be as well without a body, or that it might be as well provided with a body out of other materials: it is no unreasonable supposition that a connate aptitude to a body should render human souls more happy in a body sufficiently attempered to their most noble operations. And how much doth relation and propriety endear things otherwise mean and inconsiderable! or why should it be thought strange that a soul connaturalised to matter, should be more particularly inclined to a particular portion thereof, so that it should appropriate such a part and say, *it is mine?* And will it not be a pleasure to have a vitality diffused through what even more remotely appertains to me, to have every thing belonging to the *suppositum* perfectly vindicated from the tyrannous dominion of death? The returning of the spirits into a benumbed or sleeping toe or finger, adds a contentment to a man which he wanted before. Nor is it hence necessary the soul should covet a reunion with every effluvious particle of its former body: a desire implanted by God in a reasonable soul will aim at what is convenient, not what shall be cumbersome or monstrous. And how pleasant will it be to contemplate and admire the wisdom and power

of the great Creator in this so glorious a change, when I shall find a clod of earth, a heap of dust, refined into a celestial purity of brightness! when what was sown in corruption shall be raised in incorruption; what was sown in dishonour is raised in glory; what was sown in weakness is raised in power; what was sown a natural body is raised a spiritual body: when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality, and death be swallowed up in victory!" What a mighty increase to their joys, will prove such a blessed consummation to the hopes of glorified saints! This was what David anticipated, "I shall be satisfied when I *awake* with thy likeness." *

Here, my dear friend, you must permit me to draw these remarks to a close. In complying with your request, in treating on the happiness of glorified saints, I have suggested some hints for your consideration and consolation. But vain would be the attempt to describe that glorious felicity which our pious departed friends now enjoy, the half of which cannot be told us. They are completely delivered from all external and internal causes of sorrow—they enjoy the beatific vision of God and the Lamb—

* Psalm xvii. 15.

the society of an innumerable company of angels, and of the spirits of the just made perfect—they serve God day and night in his temple—a thousand sources of celestial bliss are opened to them, of which we know nothing;—their bliss is perpetually increasing—it stretches along the line of eternity—and will endure for ever. Our inquiries respecting its true nature and extent here, will ever fall short of what it in reality is. Virgil's humble shepherd erred less in the ideas he formed of the grandeur of imperial Rome, when he imagined it like the humble village where he kept his flock,* than we do in our ideas of heavenly blessedness. To know what heaven *is*, it must be enjoyed. Then all that we knew or conjectured here, will appear but as feeble glimpses of the truth. Let but these our fleshly tabernacles be rent in twain, in which our souls are imprisoned as in a dungeon; let but the darkness of the grave be once traversed, and all that is now obscure will be made plain. One sight, one moment's enjoyment, of the bliss on which our departed friends have entered, will compel us to exclaim—"The half was not told me!" In the mean time, instead

* Urbem, quam dicunt Romam, Melibæe, putavi
Stultus ego huic nostræ similem, &c.

of mourning their departure, let us rather rejoice in their exaltation: and, shaking off from us sinful sloth, "let us be followers off them who through faith and patience are now enjoying the promises."

FINIS.

LONDON:
BOTSON AND PALMER, PRINTERS, SAVOY STREET, STRAND.